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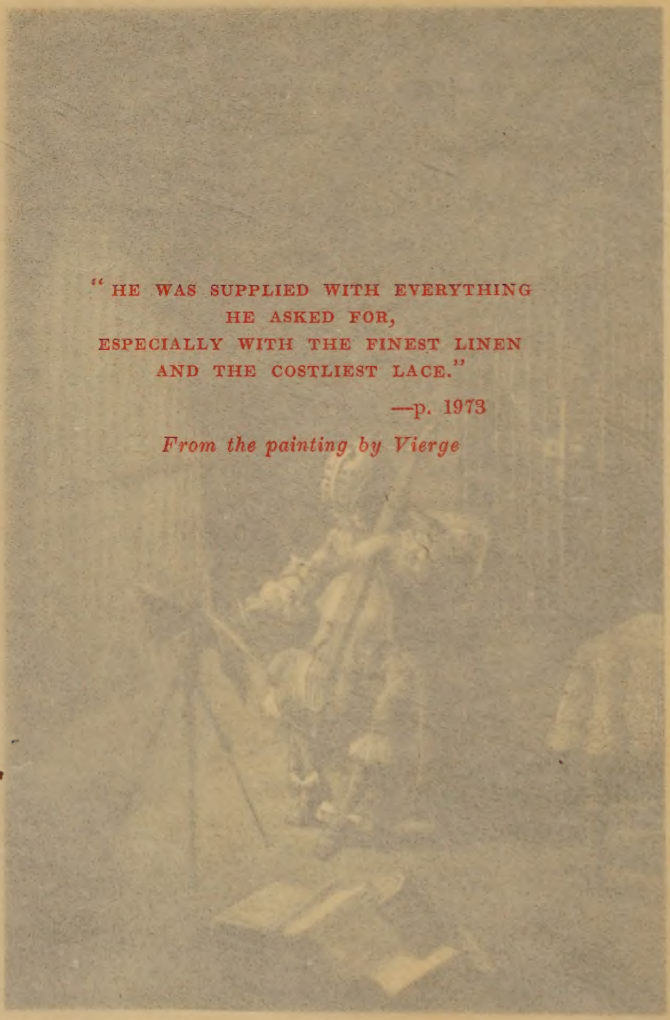
# THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK
# MARTIN GUERRE

VOLUME VI

P F COLLIER & SON
NEW YORK



"HE WAS SUPPLIED WITH EVERYTHING
HE ASKED FOR,
ESPECIALLY WITH THE FINEST LINEN
AND THE COSTLIEST LACE."

—p. 1973

*From the painting by Vierge*

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*ILLUSTRATED*

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# JOAN OF NAPLES

## 1343-1382

## CHAPTER I

IN the night of the 15th of January 1343, while the inhabitants of Naples lay wrapped in peaceful slumber, they were suddenly awakened by the bells of the three hundred churches that this thrice blessed capital contains. In the midst of the disturbance caused by so rude a call the first thought in the mind of all was that the town was on fire, or that the army of some enemy had mysteriously landed under cover of night and would put the citizens to the edge of the sword. But the doleful, intermittent sounds of all these bells, which disturbed the silence at regular and distant intervals, were an invitation to the faithful to pray for a passing soul, and it was soon evident that no disaster threatened the town, but that the king alone was in danger.

Indeed, it had been plain for several days past that the greatest uneasiness prevailed in Castel

Nuovo; the officers of the crown were assembled regularly twice a day, and persons of importance, whose right it was to make their way into the king's apartments, came out evidently bowed down with grief. But although the king's death was regarded as a misfortune that nothing could avert, yet the whole town, on learning for certain of the approach of his last hour, was affected with a sincere grief, easily understood when one learns that the man about to die, after a reign of thirty-three years, eight months, and a few days, was Robert of Anjou, the most wise, just, and glorious king who had ever sat on the throne of Sicily. And so he carried with him to the tomb the eulogies and regrets of all his subjects.

Soldiers would speak with enthusiasm of the long wars he had waged with Frederic and Peter of Aragon, against Henry VII and Louis of Bavaria, and felt their hearts beat high, remembering the glories of campaigns in Lombardy and Tuscany; priests would gratefully extol his constant defence of the papacy against Ghibelline attacks, and the founding of convents, hospitals, and churches throughout his kingdom; in the world of letters he was regarded as the most learned king in Christendom; Petrarch, indeed, would receive the poet's crown from no other hand, and had spent three consecutive days answering all the questions that

Robert had deigned to ask him on every topic of human knowledge. The men of law, astonished by the wisdom of those laws which now enriched the Neapolitan code, had dubbed him the Solomon of their day; the nobles applauded him for protecting their ancient privileges, and the people were eloquent of his clemency, piety, and mildness. In a word, priests and soldiers, philosophers and poets, nobles and peasants, trembled when they thought that the government was to fall into the hands of a foreigner and of a young girl, recalling those words of Robert, who, as he followed in the funeral train of Charles, his only son, turned as he reached the threshold of the church and sobbingly exclaimed to his barons about him, "This day the crown has fallen from my head: alas for me! alas for you!"

Now that the bells were ringing for the dying moments of the good king, every mind was full of these prophetic words: women prayed fervently to God; men from all parts of the town bent their steps towards the royal palace to get the earliest and most authentic news, and after waiting some moments, passed in exchanging sad reflections, were obliged to return as they had come, since nothing that went on in the privacy of the family found its way outside: the castle was plunged in complete darkness, the drawbridge was raised as usual, and the guards were at their post.

Yet if our readers care to be present at the death of the nephew of Saint Louis and the grandson of Charles of Anjou, we may conduct them into the chamber of the dying man. An alabaster lamp suspended from the ceiling serves to light the vast and sombre room, with walls draped in black velvet sewn with golden fleur-de-lys. Near the wall which faces the two entrance doors that at this moment are both shut close, there stands beneath a brocaded canopy an ebony bed, supported on four twisted columns carved with symbolic figures. The king, after a struggle with a violent paroxysm, has fallen swooning in the arms of his confessor and his doctor, who each hold one of his dying hands, feeling his pulse anxiously and exchanging looks of intelligence. At the foot of the bed stands a woman about fifty years of age, her hands clasped, her eyes raised to heaven, in an attitude of resigned grief: this woman is the queen. No tears dim her eyes: her sunken cheek has that waxen yellow tinge that one sees on the bodies of saints preserved by miracle. In her look is that mingling of calm and suffering that points to a soul at once tried by sorrow and imbued with religion. After the lapse of an hour, while no movement had disturbed the profound silence which reigned about the bed of death, the king trembled slightly, opened his eyes, and endeavoured feebly to raise his head. Then

thanking the physician and priest with a smile, who had both hastened to arrange his pillows, he begged the queen to come near, and told her in a low voice that he would speak with her a moment alone. The doctor and confessor retired, deeply bowing, and the king followed them with his eyes up to the moment when one of the doors closed behind them. He passed his hand across his brow, as though seeking to collect his thoughts, and rallying all his forces for the supreme effort, pronounced these words:—

"What I must say to you, Sancha, has no concern with those two good persons who were here a moment ago: their task is ended. One has done all for my body that human science could teach him, and all that has come of it is that my death is yet a little deferred; the other has now absolved me of all my sins, and assured me of God's forgiveness, yet cannot keep from me those dread apparitions which in this terrible hour arise before me. Twice have you seen me battling with a superhuman horror. My brow has been bathed in sweat, my limbs rigid, my cries have been stifled by a hand of iron. Has God permitted the Evil Spirit to tempt me? Is this remorse in phantom shape? These two conflicts I have suffered have so subdued my strength that I can never endure a third. Listen then, my Sancha, for I have instruc-

tions to give you on which perhaps the safety of my soul depends."

"My lord and my master," said the queen in the most gentle accents of submission, "I am ready to listen to your orders; and should it be that God, in the hidden designs of His providence, has willed to call you to His glory while we are plunged in grief, your last wishes shall be fulfilled here on earth most scrupulously and exactly. But," she added, with all the solicitude of a timid soul, "pray suffer me to sprinkle drops of holy water and banish the accursed one from this chamber, and let me offer up some part of that service of prayer that you composed in honour of your sainted brother to implore God's protection in this hour when we can ill afford to lose it."

Then opening a richly bound book, she read with fervent devotion certain verses of the office that Robert had written in a very pure Latin for his brother Louis, Bishop of Toulouse, which was in use in the Church as late as the time of the Council of Trent.

Soothed by the charm of the prayers he had himself composed, the king was near forgetting the object of the interview he had so solemnly and eagerly demanded, and letting himself lapse into a state of vague melancholy, he murmured in a subdued voice, "Yes, yes, you are right; pray for

me, for you too are a saint, and I am but a poor sinful man."

"Say not so, my lord," interrupted Doña Sancha; "you are the greatest, wisest, and most just king who has ever sat upon the throne of Naples."

"But the throne is usurped," replied Robert in a voice of gloom; "you know that the kingdom belonged to my elder brother, Charles Martel; and since Charles was on the throne of Hungary, which he inherited from his mother, the kingdom of Naples devolved by right upon his eldest son, Carobert, and not on me, who am the third in rank of the family. And I have suffered myself to be crowned in my nephew's stead, though he was the only lawful king; I have put the younger branch in the place of the elder, and for thirty-three years I have stifled the reproaches of my conscience. True, I have won battles, made laws, founded churches; but a single word serves to give the lie to all the pompous titles showered upon me by the people's admiration, and this one word rings out clearer in my ears than all the flattery of courtiers, all the songs of poets, all the orations of the crowd:—I am an usurper!"

"Be not unjust towards yourself, my lord, and bear in mind that if you did not abdicate in favour of the rightful heir, it was because you wished to save the people from the worst misfortunes. More-

over," continued the queen, with that air of profound conviction that an unanswerable argument inspires, "you have remained king by the consent and authority of our Holy Father the sovereign pontiff, who disposes of the throne as a fief belonging to the Church."

"I have long quieted my scruples thus," replied the dying man, "and the pope's authority has kept me silent; but whatever security one may pretend to feel in one's lifetime, there yet comes a dreadful solemn hour when all illusions needs must vanish: this hour for me has come, and now I must appear before God, the one unfailing Judge."

"If His justice cannot fail, is not His mercy infinite?" pursued the queen, with the glow of sacred inspiration. "Even if there were good reason for the fear that has shaken your soul, what fault could not be effaced by a repentance so noble? Have you not repaired the wrong you may have done your nephew Carobert, by bringing his younger son André to your kingdom and marrying him to Joan, your poor Charles's elder daughter? Will not they inherit your crown?"

"Alas!" cried Robert, with a deep sigh, "God is punishing me perhaps for thinking too late of this just reparation. O my good and noble Sancha, you touch a chord which vibrates sadly in my heart, and you anticipate the unhappy confidence I was

about to make. I feel a gloomy presentiment—and in the hour of death presentiment is prophecy—that the two sons of my nephew, Louis, who has been King of Hungary since his father died, and André, whom I desired to make King of Naples, will prove the scourge of my family. Ever since André set foot in our castle, a strange fatality has pursued and overturned my projects. I had hoped that if André and Joan were brought up together a tender intimacy would arise between the two children, and that the beauty of our skies, our civilisation, and the attractions of our court would end by softening whatever rudeness there might be in the young Hungarian's character; but in spite of my efforts all has tended to cause coldness, and even aversion, between the bridal pair. Joan, scarcely fifteen, is far ahead of her age. Gifted with a brilliant and mobile mind, a noble and lofty character, a lively and glowing fancy, now free and frolicsome as a child, now grave and proud as a queen, trustful and simple as a young girl, passionate and sensitive as a woman, she presents the most striking contrast to André, who, after a stay of ten years at our court, is wilder, more gloomy, more intractable than ever. His cold, regular features, impassive countenance, and indifference to every pleasure that his wife appears to love, all this has raised between him and Joan a barrier of indifference,

even of antipathy. To the tenderest effusion his reply is no more than a scornful smile or a frown, and he never seems happier than when on a pretext of the chase he can escape from the court. These, then, are the two, man and wife, on whose heads my crown shall rest, who in a short space will find themselves exposed to every passion whose dull growl is now heard below a deceptive calm, but which only awaits the moment when I breathe my last, to burst forth upon them."

"O my God, my God!" the queen kept repeating in her grief: her arms fell by her side, like the arms of a statue weeping by a tomb.

"Listen, Doña Sancha. I know that your heart has never clung to earthly vanities, and that you only wait till God has called me to Himself to withdraw to the convent of Santa Maria della Croce, founded by yourself in the hope that you might there end your days. Far be it from me to dissuade you from your sacred vocation, when I am myself descending into the tomb and am conscious of the nothingness of all human greatness. Only grant me one year of widowhood before you pass on to your bridal with the Lord, one year in which you will watch over Joan and her husband, to keep from them all the dangers that threaten. Already the woman who was the seneschal's wife and her son have too much influence over our grand-

daughter; be specially careful, and amid the many interests, intrigues, and temptations that will surround the young queen, distrust particularly the affection of Bertrand d'Artois, the beauty of Louis of Tarentum, and the ambition of Charles of Durazzo."

The king paused, exhausted by the effort of speaking; then turning on his wife a supplicating glance and extending his thin wasted hand, he added in a scarcely audible voice—

"Once again I entreat you, leave not the court before a year has passed. Do you promise me?"

"I promise, my lord."

"And now," said Robert, whose face at these words took on a new animation, "call my confessor and the physician and summon the family, for the hour is at hand, and soon I shall not have the strength to speak my last words."

A few moments later the priest and the doctor re-entered the room, their faces bathed in tears. The king thanked them warmly for their care of him in his last illness, and begged them help to dress him in the coarse garb of a Franciscan monk, that God, as he said, seeing him die in poverty, humility, and penitence, might the more easily grant him pardon. The confessor and doctor placed upon his naked feet the sandals worn by mendicant friars, robed him in a Franciscan frock, and tied the rope

about his waist. Stretched thus upon his bed, his brow surmounted by his scanty locks, with his long white beard, and his hands crossed upon his breast, the King of Naples looked like one of those aged anchorites who spend their lives in mortifying the flesh, and whose souls, absorbed in heavenly contemplation, glide insensibly from out their last ecstasy into eternal bliss. Some time he lay thus with closed eyes, putting up a silent prayer to God; then he bade them light the spacious room as for a great solemnity, and gave a sign to the two persons who stood, one at the head, the other at the foot of the bed. The two folding doors opened, and the whole of the royal family, with the queen at their head and the chief barons following, took their places in silence around the dying king to hear his last wishes.

His eyes turned toward Joan, who stood next him on his right hand, with an indescribable look of tenderness and grief. She was of a beauty so unusual and so marvellous, that her grandfather was fascinated by the dazzling sight, and mistook her for an angel that God had sent to console him on his deathbed. The pure lines of her fine profile, her great black liquid eyes, her noble brow uncovered, her hair shining like the raven's wing, her delicate mouth, the whole effect of this beautiful face on the mind of those who beheld her was that

of a deep melancholy and sweetness, impressing itself once and for ever. Tall and slender, but without the excessive thinness of some young girls, her movements had that careless supple grace that recall the waving of a flower stalk in the breeze. But in spite of all these smiling and innocent graces one could yet discern in Robert's heiress a will firm and resolute to brave every obstacle, and the dark rings that circled her fine eyes plainly showed that her heart was already agitated by passions beyond her years.

Beside Joan stood her younger sister, Marie, who was twelve or thirteen years of age, the second daughter of Charles, Duke of Calabria, who had died before her birth, and whose mother, Marie of Valois, had unhappily been lost to her from her cradle. Exceedingly pretty and shy, she seemed distressed by such an assembly of great personages, and quietly drew near to the widow of the grand seneschal, Philippa, surnamed the Catanese, the princesses' governess, whom they honoured as a mother. Behind the princesses and beside this lady stood her son, Robert of Cabane, a handsome young man, proud and upright, who with his left hand played with his slight moustache while he secretly cast on Joan a glance of audacious boldness. The group was completed by Doña Cancha, the young chamberwoman to the princesses, and by the Count

of Terlizzi, who exchanged with her many a furtive look and many an open smile. The second group was composed of André, Joan's husband, and Friar Robert, tutor to the young prince, who had come with him from Budapesth, and never left him for a minute. André was at this time perhaps eighteen years old: at first sight one was struck by the extreme regularity of his features, his handsome, noble face, and abundant fair hair; but among all these Italian faces, with their vivid animation, his countenance lacked expression, his eyes seemed dull, and something hard and icy in his looks revealed his wild character and foreign extraction. His tutor's portrait Petrarch has drawn for us: crimson face, hair and beard red, figure short and crooked; proud in poverty, rich and miserly; like a second Diogenes, with hideous and deformed limbs barely concealed beneath his friar's frock.

In the third group stood the widow of Philip, Prince of Tarentum, the king's brother, honoured at the court of Naples with the title of Empress of Constantinople, a style inherited by her as the granddaughter of Baldwin II. Anyone accustomed to sound the depths of the human heart would at one glance have perceived that this woman under her ghastly pallor concealed an implacable hatred, a venomous jealousy, and an all-devouring ambition. She had her three sons about her—Robert,

Philip and Louis, the youngest. Had the king chosen out from among his nephews the handsomest, bravest, and most generous, there can be no doubt that Louis of Tarentum would have obtained the crown. At the age of twenty-three he had already excelled the cavaliers of most renown in feats of arms; honest, loyal, and brave, he no sooner conceived a project than he promptly carried it out. His brow shone in that clear light which seems to serve as a halo of success to natures so privileged as his; his fine eyes, of a soft and velvety black, subdued the hearts of men who could not resist their charm, and his caressing smile made conquest sweet. A child of destiny, he had but to use his will; some power unknown, some beneficent fairy had watched over his birth, and undertaken to smooth away all obstacles, gratify all desires.

Near to him, but in the fourth group, his cousin Charles of Duras stood and scowled. His mother, Agnes, the widow of the Duke of Durazzo and Albania, another of the king's brothers, looked upon him affrighted, clutching to her breast her two younger sons, Ludovico, Count of Gravina, and Robert, Prince of Morea. Charles, pale-faced, with short hair and thick beard, was glancing with suspicion first at his dying uncle and then at Joan and the little Marie, then again at his cousins, apparently so excited by tumultuous thoughts that he could not

stand still. His feverish uneasiness presented a marked contrast with the calm, dreamy face of Bertrand d'Artois, who, giving precedence to his father Charles, approached the queen at the foot of the bed, and so found himself face to face with Joan. The young man was so absorbed by the beauty of the princess that he seemed to see nothing else in the room.

As soon as Joan and André, the Princes of Tarentum and Durazzo, the Counts of Artois, and Queen Sancha had taken their places round the bed of death, forming a semicircle, as we have just described, the vice-chancellor passed through the rows of barons, who according to their rank were following closely after the princes of the blood, and bowing low before the king, unfolded a parchment sealed with the royal seal, and read in a solemn voice, amid a profound silence:—

"Robert, by the grace of God King of Sicily and Jerusalem, Count of Provence, Forcalquier, and Piedmont, Vicar of the Holy Roman Church, hereby nominates and declares his sole heiress in the kingdom of Sicily on this side and the other side of the strait, as also in the counties of Provence, Forcalquier, and Piedmont, and in all his other territories, Joan, Duchess of Calabria, elder daughter of the excellent lord Charles, Duke of Calabria, of illustrious memory.

"Moreover, he nominates and declares the honourable lady Marie, younger daughter of the late Duke of Calabria, his heiress in the county of Alba and in the jurisdiction of the valley of Grati and the territory of Giordano, with all their castles and dependencies; and orders that the lady thus named receive them in fief direct from the aforesaid duchess and her heirs; on this condition, however, that if the duchess give and grant to her illustrious sister or to her assigns the sum of 10,000 ounces of gold by way of compensation, the county and jurisdiction aforesaid shall remain in the possession of the duchess and her heirs.

"Moreover, he wills and commands, for private and secret reasons, that the aforesaid lady Marie shall contract a marriage with the very illustrious prince, Louis, reigning King of Hungary. And in case any impediment should appear to this marriage by reason of the union said to be already arranged and signed between the King of Hungary and the King of Bohemia and his daughter, our lord the king commands that the illustrious lady Marie shall contract a marriage with the elder son of the mighty lord Don Juan, Duke of Normandy, himself the elder son of the reigning King of France."

At this point Charles of Durazzo gave Marie a singularly meaning look, which escaped the notice of all present, their attention being absorbed by the

reading of Robert's will. The young girl herself, from the moment when she first heard her own name, had stood confused and thunderstruck, with scarlet cheeks, not daring to raise her eyes.

The vice-chancellor continued:—

"Moreover, he has willed and commanded that the counties of Forcalquier and Provence shall in all perpetuity be united to his kingdom, and shall form one sole and inseparable dominion, whether or not there be several sons or daughters or any other reason of any kind for its partition, seeing that this union is of the utmost importance for the security and common prosperity of the kingdom and counties aforesaid.

"Moreover, he has decided and commanded that in case of the death of the Duchess Joan—which God avert!—without lawful issue of her body, the most illustrious lord André, Duke of Calabria, her husband, shall have the principality of Salerno, with the title fruits, revenues, and all the rights thereof, together with the revenue of 2000 ounces of gold for maintenance.

"Moreover, he has decided and ordered that the Queen above all, and also the venerable father Don Philip of Cabassole, Bishop of Cavaillon, vice-chancellor of the kingdom of Sicily, and the magnificent lords Philip of Sanguineto, seneschal of Provence, Godfrey of Marsan, Count of Squillace, admiral

of the kingdom, and Charles of Artois, Count of Aire, shall be governors, regents, and administrators of the aforesaid lord André and the aforesaid ladies Joan and Marie, until such time as the duke, the duchess, and the very illustrious lady Marie shall have attained their twenty-fifth year," etc. etc.

When the vice-chancellor had finished reading, the king sat up, and glancing round upon his fair and numerous family, thus spoke:—

"My children, you have heard my last wishes. I have bidden you all to my deathbed, that you may see how the glory of the world passes away. Those whom men name the great ones of the earth have more duties to perform, and after death more accounts to render: it is in this that their greatness lies. I have reigned thirty-three years, and God before whom I am about to appear, God to whom my sighs have often arisen during my long and painful life, God alone knows the thoughts that rend my heart in the hour of death. Soon shall I be lying in the tomb, and all that remains of me in this world will live in the memory of those who pray for me. But before I leave you for ever, you, oh, you who are twice my daughters, whom I have loved with a double love, and you my nephews who have had from me all the care and affection of a father, promise me to be ever united in heart and in wish, as indeed you are in my love. I have lived

longer than your fathers, I the eldest of all, and thus no doubt God has wished to tighten the bonds of your affection, to accustom you to live in one family and to pay honour to one head. I have loved you all alike, as a father should, without exception or preference. I have disposed of my throne according to the law of nature and the inspiration of my conscience. Here are the heirs of the crown of Naples; you, Joan, and you, André, will never forget the love and respect that are due between husband and wife, and mutually sworn by you at the foot of the altar; and you, my nephews all, my barons, my officers, render homage to your lawful sovereigns; André of Hungary, Louis of Tarentum, Charles of Durazzo, remember that you are brothers; woe to him who shall imitate the perfidy of Cain! May his blood fall upon his own head, and may he be accursed by Heaven as he is by the mouth of a dying man; and may the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit descend upon that man whose heart is good, when the Lord of mercy shall call to my soul Himself!"

The king remained motionless, his arms raised, his eyes fixed on heaven, his cheeks extraordinarily bright, while the princes, barons, and officers of the court proffered to Joan and her husband the oath of fidelity and allegiance. When it was the turn of the Princes of Duras to advance, Charles

disdainfully stalked past André, and bending his knee before the princess, said in a loud voice, as he kissed her hand—

"To you, my queen, I pay my homage."

All looks were turned fearfully towards the dying man, but the good king no longer heard. Seeing him fall back rigid and motionless, Doña Sancha burst into sobs, and cried in a voice choked with tears—

"The king is dead; let us pray for his soul."

At the very same moment all the princes hurried from the room, and every passion hitherto suppressed in the presence of the king now found its vent like a mighty torrent breaking through its banks.

"Long live Joan!" Robert of Cabane, Louis of Tarentum, and Bertrand of Artois were the first to exclaim, while the prince's tutor, furiously breaking through the crowd and apostrophising the various members of the council of regency, cried aloud in varying tones of passion, "Gentlemen, you have forgotten the king's wish already; you must cry, 'Long live André!' too"; then, wedding example to precept, and himself making more noise than all the barons together, he cried in a voice of thunder—

"Long live the King of Naples!"

But there was no echo to his cry, and Charles of

Durazzo, measuring the Dominican with a terrible look, approached the queen, and taking her by the hand, slid back the curtains of the balcony, from which was seen the square and the town of Naples. So far as the eye could reach there stretched an immense crowd, illuminated by streams of light, and thousands of heads were turned upward towards Castel Nuovo to gather any news that might be announced. Charles respectfully drawing back and indicating his fair cousin with his hand, cried out—

"People of Naples, the King is dead: long live the Queen!"

"Long live Joan, Queen of Naples!" replied the people, with a single mighty cry that resounded through every quarter of the town.

The events that on this night had followed each other with the rapidity of a dream had produced so deep an impression on Joan's mind, that, agitated by a thousand different feelings, she retired to her own rooms, and shutting herself up in her chamber, gave free vent to her grief. So long as the conflict of so many ambitions waged about the tomb, the young queen, refusing every consolation that was offered her, wept bitterly for the death of her grandfather, who had loved her to the point of weakness. The king was buried with all solemnity in the church of Santa Chiara, which he had

himself founded and dedicated to the Holy Sacrament, enriching it with magnificent frescoes by Giotto and other precious relics, among which is shown still, behind the tribune of the high altar, two columns of white marble taken from Solomon's temple. There still lies Robert, represented on his tomb in the dress of a king and in a monk's frock, on the right of the monument to his son Charles, the Duke of Calabria.

## CHAPTER II

AS soon as the obsequies were over, André's tutor hastily assembled the chief Hungarian lords, and it was decided in a council held in the presence of the prince and with his consent, to send letters to his mother, Elizabeth of Poland, and his brother, Louis of Hungary, to make known to them the purport of Robert's will, and at the same time to lodge a complaint at the court of Avignon against the conduct of the princes and people of Naples in that they had proclaimed Joan alone Queen of Naples, thus overlooking the rights of her husband, and further to demand for him the pope's order for André's coronation. Friar Robert, who had not only a profound knowledge of the court intrigues, but also the experience of a philosopher and all a monk's cunning, told his pupil that he ought to profit by the depression of spirit the king's death had produced in Joan, and ought not to suffer her favourites to use this time in influencing her by their seductive counsels.

But Joan's ability to receive consolation was quite as ready as her grief had at first been impetuous:

the sobs which seemed to be breaking her heart ceased all at once; new thoughts, more gentle, less lugubrious, took possession of the young queen's mind; the trace of tears vanished, and a smile lit up her liquid eyes like the sun's ray following on rain. This change, anxiously awaited, was soon observed by Joan's chamberwoman: she stole to the queen's room, and falling on her knees, in accents of flattery and affection, she offered her first congratulations to her lovely mistress. Joan opened her arms and held her in a long embrace; for Doña Cancha was far more to her than a lady-in-waiting; she was the companion of infancy, the depositary of all her secrets, the confidante of her most private thoughts. One had but to glance at this young girl to understand the fascination she could scarcely fail to exercise over the queen's mind. She had a frank and smiling countenance, such as inspires confidence and captivates the mind at first sight. Her face had an irresistible charm, with clear blue eyes, warm golden hair, mouth bewitchingly turned up at the corners, and delicate little chin. Wild, happy, light of heart, pleasure and love were the breath of her being; her dainty refinement, her charming inconstancies, all made her at sixteen as lovely as an angel, though at heart she was corrupt. The whole court was at her feet, and Joan felt more affection for her than for her own sister.

"Well, my dear Cancha," she murmured, with a sigh, "you find me very sad and very unhappy!"

"And you find me, fair queen," replied the confidante, fixing an admiring look on Joan,—"you find me just the opposite, very happy that I can lay at your feet before anyone else the proof of the joy that the people of Naples are at this moment feeling. Others perhaps may envy you the crown that shines upon your brow, the throne which is one of the noblest in the world, the shouts of this entire town that sound rather like worship than homage; but I, madam, I envy you your lovely black hair, your dazzling eyes, your more than mortal grace, which make every man adore you."

"And yet you know, my Cancha, I am much to be pitied both as a queen and as a woman: when one is fifteen a crown is heavy to wear, and I have not the liberty of the meanest of my subjects—I mean in my affections; for before I reached an age when I could think I was sacrificed to a man whom I can never love."

"Yet, madam," replied Cancha in a more insinuating voice, "in this court there is a young cavalier who might by virtue of respect, love, and devotion have made you forget the claims of this foreigner, alike unworthy to be our king and to be your husband."

The queen heaved a heavy sigh.

"When did you lose your skill to read my heart?" she cried. "Must I actually tell you that this love is making me wretched? True, at the very first this unsanctioned love was a keen joy: a new life seemed to wake within my heart; I was drawn on, fascinated by the prayers, the tears, and the despair of this man, by the opportunities that his mother so easily granted, she whom I had always looked upon as my own mother; I have loved him . . . O my God, I am still so young, and my past is so unhappy. At times strange thoughts come into my mind: I fancy he no longer loves me, that he never did love me; I fancy he has been led on by ambition, by self-interest, by some ignoble motive, and has only feigned a feeling that he has never really felt. I feel myself a coldness I cannot account for; in his presence I am constrained, I am troubled by his look, his voice makes me tremble: I fear him; I would sacrifice a year of my life could I never have listened to him."

These words seemed to touch the young confidante to the very depths of her soul; a shade of sadness crossed her brow, her eyelids dropped, and for some time she answered nothing, showing sorrow rather than surprise. Then, lifting her head gently, she said, with visible embarrassment—

"I should never have dared to pass so severe a judgment upon a man whom my sovereign lady has

raised above other men by casting upon him a look of kindness; but if Robert of Cabane has deserved the reproach of inconstancy and ingratitude, if he has perjured himself like a coward, he must indeed be the basest of all miserable beings, despising a happiness which other men might have entreated of God the whole time of their life and paid for through eternity. One man I know, who weeps both night and day without hope or consolation, consumed by a slow and painful malady, when one word might yet avail to save him, did it come from the lips of my noble mistress."

"I will not hear another word," cried Joan, suddenly rising; "there shall be no new cause for remorse in my life. Trouble has come upon me through my loves, both lawful and criminal; alas! no longer will I try to control my awful fate, I will bow my head without a murmur. I am the queen, and I must yield myself up for the good of my subjects."

"Will you forbid me, madam," replied Doña Cancha in a kind, affectionate tone,—"will you forbid me to name Bertrand of Artois in your presence, that unhappy man, with the beauty of an angel and the modesty of a girl? Now that you are queen and have the life and death of your subjects in your own keeping, will you feel no kindness towards an unfortunate one whose only fault is to

adore you, who strives with all his mind and strength to bear a chance look of yours without dying of his joy?"

"I have struggled hard never to look on him," cried the queen, urged by an impulse she was not strong enough to conquer: then, to efface the impression that might well have been made on her friend's mind, she added severely, "I forbid you to pronounce his name before me; and if he should ever venture to complain, I bid you tell him from me that the first time I even suspect the cause of his distress he will be banished for ever from my presence."

"Ah, madam, dismiss me also; for I shall never be strong enough to do so hard a bidding: the unhappy man who cannot awake in your heart so much as a feeling of pity may now be struck down by yourself in your wrath, for here he stands; he has heard your sentence, and come to die at your feet."

The last words were spoken in a louder voice, so that they might be heard from outside, and Bertrand of Artois came hurriedly into the room and fell on his knees before the queen. For a long time past the young lady-in-waiting had perceived that Robert of Cabane had, through his own fault, lost the love of Joan; for his tyranny had indeed become more unendurable to her than her husband's.

Doña Cancha had been quick enough to perceive that the eyes of her young mistress were wont to rest with a kind of melancholy gentleness on Bertrand, a young man of handsome appearance but with a sad and dreamy expression; so when she made up her mind to speak in his interests, she was persuaded that the queen already loved him. Still, a bright colour overspread Joan's face, and her anger would have fallen on both culprits alike, when in the next room a sound of steps was heard, and the voice of the grand seneschal's widow in conversation with her son fell on the ears of the three young people like a clap of thunder. Doña Cancha, pale as death, stood trembling; Bertrand felt that he was lost all the more because his presence compromised the queen; Joan only, with that wonderful presence of mind she was destined to preserve in the most difficult crises of her future life, thrust the young man against the carved back of her bed, and concealed him completely beneath the ample curtain: she then signed to Cancha to go forward and meet the governess and her son.

But before we conduct into the queen's room these two persons, whom our readers may remember in Joan's train about the bed of King Robert, we must relate the circumstances which had caused the family of the Catanese to rise with incredible rapidity from the lowest class of the people to the

highest rank at court. When Doña Violante of Aragon, first wife of Robert of Anjou, became the mother of Charles, who was later on the Duke of Calabria, a nurse was sought for the infant among the most handsome women of the people. After inspecting many women of equal merit as regards beauty, youth, and health, the princess's choice lighted on Philippa, a young Catanese woman, the wife of a fisherman of Trapani, and by condition a laundress. This young woman, as she washed her linen on the bank of a stream, had dreamed strange dreams: she had fancied herself summoned to court, wedded to a great personage, and receiving the honours of a great lady. Thus when she was called to Castel Nuovo her joy was great, for she felt that her dreams now began to be realised. Philippa was installed at the court, and a few months after she began to nurse the child the fisherman was dead and she was a widow. Meanwhile Raymond of Cabane, the major-domo of King Charles II's house, had bought a negro from some corsairs, and having had him baptized by his own name, had given him his liberty; afterwards observing that he was able and intelligent, he had appointed him head cook in the king's kitchen; and then he had gone away to the war. During the absence of his patron the negro managed his own affairs at the court so cleverly, that in a short time

he was able to buy land, houses, farms, silver plate, and horses, and could vie in riches with the best in the kingdom; and as he constantly won higher favour in the royal family, he passed on from the kitchen to the wardrobe. The Catanese had also deserved very well of her employers, and as a reward for the care she had bestowed on the child, the princess married her to the negro, and he, as a wedding gift, was granted the title of knight. From this day forward, Raymond of Cabane and Philippa the laundress rose in the world so rapidly that they had no equal in influence at court. After the death of Doña Violante, the Catanese became the intimate friend of Doña Sancha, Robert's second wife, whom we introduced to our readers at the beginning of this narrative. Charles, her foster-son, loved her as a mother, and she was the confidante of his two wives in turn, especially of the second wife, Marie of Valois. And as the quondam laundress had in the end learned all the manners and customs of the court, she was chosen at the birth of Joan and her sister to be governess and mistress over the young girls, and at this juncture Raymond was created major-domo. Finally, Marie of Valois on her deathbed commended the two young princesses to her care, begging her to look on them as her own daughters. Thus Philippa the Catanese, honoured in future as foster mother of

the heiress to the throne of Naples, had power to nominate her husband grand seneschal, one of the seven most important offices in the kingdom, and to obtain knighthood for her sons. Raymond of Cabane was buried like a king in a marble tomb in the church of the Holy Sacrament, and there he was speedily joined by two of his sons. The third, Robert, a youth of extraordinary strength and beauty, gave up an ecclesiastical career, and was himself made major-domo, his two sisters being married to the Count of Merlizzi and the Count of Morcone respectively. This was now the state of affairs, and the influence of the grand seneschal's widow seemed for ever established, when an unexpected event suddenly occurred, causing such injury as might well suffice to upset the edifice of her fortunes that had been raised stone by stone so patiently and slowly: this edifice was now undermined and threatened to fall in a single day. It was the sudden apparition of Friar Robert, who followed to the court of Rome his young pupil, who from infancy had been Joan's destined husband, which thus shattered all the designs of the Catanese and seriously menaced her future. The monk had not been slow to understand that so long as she remained at the court, André would be no more than the slave, possibly even the victim, of his wife. Thus all Friar Robert's thoughts were

obstinately concentrated on a single end, that of getting rid of the Catanese or neutralising her influence. The prince's tutor and the governess of the heiress had but to exchange one glance, icy, penetrating, plain to read: their looks met like lightning flashes of hatred and of vengeance. The Catanese who felt she was detected, lacked courage to fight this man in the open, and so conceived the hope of strengthening her tottering empire by the arts of corruption and debauchery. She instilled by degrees into her pupil's mind the poison of vice, inflamed her youthful imagination with precocious desires, sowed in her heart the seeds of an unconquerable aversion for her husband, surrounded the poor child with abandoned women, and especially attached to her the beautiful and attractive Doña Cancha, who is branded by contemporary authors with the name of a courtesan; then summed up all these lessons in infamy by prostituting Joan to her own son. The poor girl, polluted by sin before she knew what life was, threw her whole self into this first passion with all the ardour of youth, and loved Robert of Cabane so violently, so madly, that the Catanese congratulated herself on the success of her infamy, believing that she held her prey so fast in her toils that her victim would never attempt to escape them.

A year passed by before Joan, conquered by her

infatuation, conceived the smallest suspicion of her lover's sincerity. He, more ambitious than affectionate, found it easy to conceal his coldness under the cloak of a brotherly intimacy, of blind submission, and of unswerving devotion; perhaps he would have deceived his mistress for a longer time had not Bertrand of Artois fallen madly in love with Joan. Suddenly the bandage fell from the young girl's eyes; comparing the two with the natural instinct of a woman beloved which never goes astray, she perceived that Robert of Cabane loved her for his own sake, while Bertrand of Artois would give his life to make her happy. A light fell upon her past: she mentally recalled the circumstances that preceded and accompanied her earliest love; and a shudder went through her at the thought that she had been sacrificed to a cowardly seducer by the very woman she had loved most in the world, whom she had called by the name of mother.

Joan drew back into herself, and wept bitterly. Wounded by a single blow in all her affections, at first her grief absorbed her; then, roused to sudden anger, she proudly raised her head, for now her love was changed to scorn. Robert, amazed at her cold and haughty reception of him, following on so great a love, was stung by jealousy and wounded pride. He broke out into bitter reproach and

violent recrimination, and, letting fall the mask, once for all lost his place in Joan's heart.

His mother at last saw that it was time to interfere: she rebuked her son, accusing him of upsetting all her plans by his clumsiness.

"As you have failed to conquer her by love," she said, "you must now subdue her by fear. The secret of her honour is in our hands, and she will never dare to rebel. She plainly loves Bertrand of Artois, whose languishing eyes and humble sighs contrast in a striking manner with your haughty indifference and your masterful ways. The mother of the Princes of Tarentum, the Empress of Constantinople, will easily seize an occasion of helping on the princess's love so as to alienate her more and more from her husband: Cancha will be the go-between, and sooner or later we shall find Bertrand at Joan's feet. Then she will be able to refuse us nothing."

While all this was going on, the old king died, and the Catanese, who had unceasingly kept on the watch for the moment she had so plainly foreseen, loudly called to her son, when she saw Bertrand slip into Joan's apartment, saying as she drew him after her—

"Follow me, the queen is ours."

It was thus that she and her son came to be there. Joan, standing in the middle of the chamber,

pallid, her eyes fixed on the curtains of the bed, concealed her agitation with a smile, and took one step forward towards her governess, stooping to receive the kiss which the latter bestowed upon her every morning. The Catanese embraced her with affected cordiality, and turning to her son, who had knelt upon one knee, said, pointing to Robert—

"My fair queen, allow the humblest of your subjects to offer his sincere congratulations and to lay his homage at your feet."

"Rise, Robert," said Joan, extending her hand kindly, and with no show of bitterness. "We were brought up together, and I shall never forget that in our childhood,—I mean those happy days when we were both innocent—I called you my brother."

"As you allow me, madam," said Robert, with an ironical smile, "I too shall always remember the names you formerly gave me."

"And I," said the Catanese, "shall forget that I speak to the Queen of Naples, in embracing once more my beloved daughter. Come, madam, away with care: you have wept long enough; we have long respected your grief. It is now time to show yourself to these good Neapolitans who bless Heaven continually for granting them a queen so beautiful and good; it is time that your favours rain upon the heads of your faithful subjects; and

my son, who surpasses all in his fidelity, comes first to ask a favour of you, in order that he may serve you yet more zealously."

Joan cast on Robert a withering look, and, speaking to the Catanese, said with a scornful air—

"You know, madam, I can refuse your son nothing."

"All he asks," continued the lady, "is a title which is his due, and which he inherited from his father—the title of Grand Seneschal of the Two Sicilies: I trust, my daughter, you will have no difficulty in granting this."

"But I must consult the council of regency."

"The council will hasten to ratify the queen's wishes," replied Robert, handing her the parchment with an imperious gesture: "you need only speak to the Count of Artois."

And he cast a threatening glance at the curtain, which had slightly moved.

"You are right," said the queen at once; and going up to a table she signed the parchment with a trembling hand.

"Now, my daughter, I have come in the name of all the care I bestowed on your infancy, of all the maternal love I have lavished on you, to implore a favour that my family will remember for evermore."

The queen recoiled one step, crimson with aston-

ishment and rage; but before she could find words to reply, the lady continued in a voice that betrayed no feeling—

"I request you to make my son Count of Eboli."

"That has nothing to do with me, madam; the barons of this kingdom would revolt to a man if I were on my own authority to exalt to one of the first dignities the son of a——"

"A laundress and a negro, you would say, madam?" said Robert, with a sneer. "Bertrand of Artois would be annoyed perhaps if I had a title like his."

He advanced a step towards the bed, his hand upon the hilt of his sword.

"Have mercy, Robert!" cried the queen, checking him: "I will do all you ask."

And she signed the parchment naming him Count of Eboli.

"And now," Robert went on impudently, "to show that my new title is not illusory, while you are busy about signing documents, let me have the privilege of taking part in the councils of the crown: make a declaration that, subject to your good pleasure, my mother and I are to have a deliberative voice in the council whenever an important matter is under discussion."

"Never!" cried Joan, turning pale. "Philippa and Robert, you abuse my weakness and treat your

queen shamefully. In the last few days I have wept and suffered continually, overcome by a terrible grief; I have no strength to turn to business now. Leave me, I beg: I feel my strength gives way."

"What, my daughter," cried the Catanese hypocritically, "are you feeling unwell? Come and lie down at once." And hurrying to the bed, she took hold of the curtain that concealed the Count of Artois.

The queen uttered a piercing cry, and threw herself before Philippa with the fury of a lioness. "Stop!" she cried in a choking voice; "take the privilege you ask, and now, if you value your own life, leave me."

The Catanese and her son departed instantly, not even waiting to reply, for they had got all they wanted; while Joan, trembling, ran desperately up to Bertrand, who had angrily drawn his dagger, and would have fallen upon the two favourites to take vengeance for the insults they had offered to the queen; but he was very soon disarmed by the lovely shining eyes raised to him in supplication, the two arms cast about him, and the tears shed by Joan: he fell at her feet and kissed them rapturously, with no thought of seeking excuse for his presence, with no word of love, for it was as if they had loved always: he lavished the tenderest

caresses on her, dried her tears, and pressed his trembling lips upon her lovely head. Joan began to forget her anger, her vows, and her repentance: soothed by the music of her lover's speech, she returned uncomprehending monosyllables: her heart beat till it felt like breaking, and once more she was falling beneath love's resistless spell, when a new interruption occurred, shaking her roughly out of her ecstasy; but this time the young count was able to pass quietly and calmly into a room adjoining, and Joan prepared to receive her importunate visitor with severe and frigid dignity.

The individual who arrived at so inopportune a moment was little calculated to smooth Joan's ruffled brow, being Charles, the eldest son of the Durazzo family. After he had introduced his fair cousin to the people as their only legitimate sovereign, he had sought on various occasions to obtain an interview with her, which in all probability would be decisive. Charles was one of those men who to gain their end recoil at nothing; devoured by raging ambition and accustomed from his earliest years to conceal his most ardent desires beneath a mask of careless indifference, he marched ever onward, plot succeeding plot, towards the object he was bent upon securing, and never deviated one hair's-breadth from the path he had marked out, but only acted with double prudence after each

victory, and with double courage after each defeat. His cheek grew pale with joy; when he hated most, he smiled; in all the emotions of his life, however strong, he was inscrutable. He had sworn to sit on the throne of Naples, and long had believed himself the rightful heir, as being nearest of kin to Robert of all his nephews. To him the hand of Joan would have been given, had not the old king in his latter days conceived the plan of bringing André from Hungary and re-establishing the elder branch in his person, though that had long since been forgotten. But his resolution had never for a moment been weakened by the arrival of André in the kingdom, or by the profound indifference wherewith Joan, preoccupied with other passion, had always received the advances of her cousin Charles of Durazzo. Neither the love of a woman nor the life of a man was of any account to him when a crown was weighed in the other scale of the balance.

During the whole time that the queen had remained invisible, Charles had hung about her apartments, and now came into her presence with respectful eagerness to inquire for his cousin's health. The young duke had been at pains to set off his noble features and elegant figure by a magnificent dress covered with golden fleur-de-lys and glittering with precious stones. His doublet of

scarlet velvet and cap of the same showed up by their own splendour the warm colouring of his skin, while his face seemed illumined by his black eyes that shone keen as an eagle's.

Charles spoke long with his cousin of the people's enthusiasm on her accession and of the brilliant destiny before her; he drew a hasty but truthful sketch of the state of the kingdom; and while he lavished praises on the queen's wisdom, he cleverly pointed out what reforms were most urgently needed by the country; he contrived to put so much warmth, yet so much reserve, into his speech that he destroyed the disagreeable impression his arrival had produced. In spite of the irregularities of her youth and the depravity brought about by her wretched education, Joan's nature impelled her to noble action: when the welfare of her subjects was concerned, she rose above the limitations of her age and sex, and, forgetting her strange position, listened to the Duke of Durazzo with the liveliest interest and the kindliest attention. He then hazarded allusions to the dangers that beset a young queen, spoke vaguely of the difficulty in distinguishing between true devotion and cowardly complaisance or interested attachment; he spoke of the ingratitude of many who had been loaded with benefits, and had been most completely trusted. Joan, who had just learned the truth of his words

by sad experience, replied with a sigh, and after a moment's silence added—

"May God, whom I call to witness for the loyalty and uprightness of my intentions, may God unmask all traitors and show me my true friends! I know that the burden laid upon me is heavy, and I presume not on my strength, but I trust that the tried experience of those counsellors to whom my uncle entrusted me, the support of my family, and your warm and sincere friendship above all, my dear cousin, will help me to accomplish my duty."

"My sincerest prayer is that you may succeed, my fair cousin, and I will not darken with doubts and fears a time that ought to be given up to joy; I will not mingle with the shouts of gladness that rise on all sides to proclaim you queen, any vain regrets over that blind fortune which has placed beside the woman whom we all alike adore, whose single glance would make a man more blest than the angels, a foreigner unworthy of your love and unworthy of your throne."

"You forget, Charles," said the queen, putting out her hand as though to check his words, "André is my husband, and it was my grandfather's will that he should reign with me."

"Never!" cried the duke indignantly; "he King of Naples! Nay, dream that the town is

shaken to its very foundations, that the people rise as one man, that our church bells sound anew Sicilian vespers, before the people of Naples will endure the rule of a handful of wild Hungarian drunkards, a deformed canting monk, a prince detested by them even as you are beloved!"

"But why is André blamed? What has he done?"

"What has he done? Why is he blamed, madam? The people blame him as stupid, coarse, a savage; the nobles blame him for ignoring their privileges and openly supporting men of obscure birth; and I, madam,"—here he lowered his voice,—"I blame him for making you unhappy."

Joan shuddered as though a wound had been touched by an unkind hand; but hiding her emotion beneath an appearance of calm, she replied in a voice of perfect indifference—

"You must be dreaming, Charles; who has given you leave to suppose I am unhappy?"

"Do not try to excuse him, my dear cousin," replied Charles eagerly; "you will injure yourself without saving him."

The queen looked fixedly at her cousin, as though she would read him through and through and find out the meaning of his words; but as she could not give credence to the horrible thought that crossed her mind, she assumed a complete confidence in her

cousin's friendship, with a view to discovering his plans, and said carelessly—

"Well, Charles, suppose I am not happy, what remedy could you offer me that I might escape my lot?"

"You ask me that, my dear cousin? Are not all remedies good when you suffer, and when you wish for revenge?"

"One must fly to those means that are possible. André will not readily give up his pretensions: he has a party of his own, and in case of open rupture, his brother the King of Hungary may declare war upon us, and bring ruin and desolation upon our kingdom."

The Duke of Duras faintly smiled, and his countenance assumed a sinister expression.

"You do not understand me," he said.

"Then explain without circumlocution," said the queen, trying to conceal the convulsive shudder that ran through her limbs.

"Listen, Joan," said Charles, taking his cousin's hand and laying it upon his heart: "can you feel that dagger?"

"I can," said Joan, and she turned pale.

"One word from you—and——"

"Yes?"

"To-morrow you will be free."

"A murder!" cried Joan, recoiling in horror:

"then I was not deceived; it is a murder that you have proposed."

"It is a necessity," said the duke calmly: "to-day I advise; later on you will give your orders."

"Enough, wretch! I cannot tell if you are more cowardly or more rash: cowardly, because you reveal a criminal plot feeling sure that I shall never denounce you; rash, because in revealing it to me you cannot tell what witnesses are near to hear it all."

"In any case, madam, since I have put myself in your hands, you must perceive that I cannot leave you till I know if I must look upon myself as your friend or as your enemy."

"Leave me," cried Joan, with a disdainful gesture; "you insult your queen."

"You forget, my dear cousin, that some day I may very likely have a claim to your kingdom."

"Do not force me to have you turned out of this room," said Joan, advancing towards the door.

"Now do not get excited, my fair cousin; I am going: but at least remember that I offered you my hand and you refused it. Remember what I say at this solemn moment: to-day I am the guilty man; some day perhaps I may be the judge."

He went away slowly, twice turning his head, repeating in the language of signs his menacing prophecy. Joan hid her face in her hands, and for

a long time remained plunged in dismal reflections; then anger got the better of all her other feelings, and she summoned Doña Cancha, bidding her not to allow anybody to enter, on any pretext whatsoever.

This prohibition was not for the Count of Artois, for the reader will remember that he was in the adjoining room.

## CHAPTER III

NIGHT fell, and from the Molo to the Mergellina, from the Capuano Castle to the hill of St. Elmo, deep silence had succeeded the myriad sounds that go up from the noisiest city in the world. Charles of Durazzo, quickly walking away from the square of the Correggi, first casting one last look of vengeance at the Castel Nuovo, plunged into the labyrinth of dark streets that twist and turn, cross and recross one another, in this ancient city, and after a quarter of an hour's walking, that was first slow, then very rapid, arrived at his ducal palace near the church of San Giovanni al Mare. He gave certain instructions in a harsh, peremptory tone to a page who took his sword and cloak. Then Charles shut himself into his room, without going up to see his poor mother, who was weeping, sad and solitary, over her son's ingratitude, and like every other mother taking her revenge by praying God to bless him.

The Duke of Durazzo walked up and down his

room several times like a lion in a cage, counting the minutes in a fever of impatience, and was on the point of summoning a servant and renewing his commands, when two dull raps on the door informed him that the person he was waiting for had arrived. He opened at once, and a man of about fifty, dressed in black from head to foot, entered, humbly bowing, and carefully shut the door behind him. Charles threw himself into an easy-chair, and gazing fixedly at the man who stood before him, his eyes on the ground and his arms crossed upon his breast in an attitude of the deepest respect and blind obedience, he said slowly, as though weighing each word—

"Master Nicholas of Melazzo, have you any remembrance left of the services I once rendered you?"

The man to whom these words were addressed trembled in every limb, as if he heard the voice of Satan come to claim his soul; then lifting a look of terror to his questioner's face, he asked in a voice of gloom—

"What have I done, my lord, to deserve this reproach?"

"It is not a reproach: I ask a simple question."

"Can my lord doubt for a moment of my eternal gratitude? Can I forget the favours your Excellency showed me? Even if I could so lose my

reason and my memory, are not my wife and son ever here to remind me that to you we owe all—our life, our honour, and our fortune? I was guilty of an infamous act," said the notary, lowering his voice, "a crime that would not only have brought upon my head the penalty of death, but which meant the confiscation of my goods, the ruin of my family, poverty and shame for my only son—that very son, sire, for whom I, miserable wretch, had wished to ensure a brilliant future by means of my frightful crime: you had in your hands the proofs of this——"

"I have them still."

"And you will not ruin me, my lord," resumed the notary, trembling; "I am at your feet, your Excellency; take my life and I will die in torment without a murmur, but save my son, since you have been so merciful as to spare him till now; have pity on his mother; my lord, have pity!"

"Be assured," said Charles, signing to him to rise; "it is nothing to do with your life; that will come later, perhaps. What I wish to ask of you now is a much simpler, easier matter."

"My lord, I await your command."

"First," said the duke, in a voice of playful irony, "you must draw up a formal contract of my marriage."

"At once, your Excellency."

"You are to write in the first article that my wife brings me as dowry the county of Alba, the jurisdiction of Grati and Giordano, with all castles, fiefs, and lands dependent thereto."

"But, my lord——" replied the poor notary, greatly embarrassed.

"Do you find any difficulty, Master Nicholas?"

"God forbid, your Excellency, but——"

"Well, what is it?"

"Because, if my lord will permit—because there is only one person in Naples who possesses that dowry your Excellency mentions."

"And so?"

"And she," stammered the notary, embarrassed more and more,—"she is the queen's sister."

"And in the contract you will write the name of Marie of Anjou."

"But the young maiden," replied Nicholas timidly, "whom your Excellency would marry is destined, I thought, under the will of our late king of blessed memory, to become the wife of the King of Hungary or else of the grandson of the King of France."

"Ah, I understand your surprise: you may learn from this that an uncle's intentions are not always the same as his nephew's."

"In that case, sire, if I dared—if my lord would deign to give me leave—if I had an opinion I might

give, I would humbly entreat your Excellency to reflect that this would mean the abduction of a minor."

"Since when did you learn to be scrupulous, Master Nicholas?"

These words were uttered with a glance so terrible that the poor notary was crushed, and had hardly the strength to reply—

"In an hour the contract will be ready."

"Good: we agree as to the first point," continued Charles, resuming his natural tone of voice. "You now will hear my second charge. You have known the Duke of Calabria's valet for the last two years pretty intimately?"

"Tommaso Pace; why, he is my best friend."

"Excellent. Listen, and remember that on your discretion the safety or ruin of your family depends. A plot will soon be on foot gainst the queen's husband; the conspirators no doubt will gain over André's valet, the man you call your best friend; never leave him for an instant, try to be his shadow; day by day and hour by hour come to me and report the progress of the plot, the names of the plotters."

"Is this all your Excellency's command?"

"All."

The notary respectfully bowed, and withdrew to put the orders at once into execution. Charles spent the rest of that night writing to his uncle the Car-

dinal de Perigord, one of the most influential prelates at the court of Avignon. He begged him before all things to use his authority so as to prevent Pope Clement VI from signing the bull that would sanction André's coronation, and he ended his letter by earnestly entreating his uncle to win the pope's consent to his marriage with the queen's sister.

"We shall see, fair cousin," he said as he sealed his letter, "which of us is best at understanding where our interest lies. You would not have me as a friend, so you shall have me as an enemy. Sleep on in the arms of your lover: I will wake you when the time comes. I shall be Duke of Calabria perhaps some day, and that title, as you well know, belongs to the heir to the throne."

The next day and on the following days a remarkable change took place in the behaviour of Charles towards André: he showed him signs of great friendliness, cleverly flattering his inclinations, and even persuading Friar Robert that, far from feeling any hostility in the matter of André's coronation, his most earnest desire was that his uncle's wishes should be respected; and that, though he might have given the impression of acting contrary to them, it had only been done with a view to appeasing the populace, who in their first excitement might have been stirred up to insurrection against the Hunga-

rians. He declared with much warmth that he heartily detested the people about the queen, whose counsels tended to lead her astray, and he promised to join Friar Robert in the endeavour to get rid of Joan's favourites by all such means as fortune might put at his disposal. Although the Dominican did not believe in the least in the sincerity of his ally's protestations, he yet gladly welcomed the aid which might prove so useful to the prince's cause, and attributed the sudden change of front to some recent rupture between Charles and his cousin, promising himself that he would make capital out of his resentment. Be that as it might, Charles wormed himself into André's heart, and after a few days one of them could hardly be seen without the other. If André went out hunting, his greatest pleasure in life, Charles was eager to put his pack or his falcons at his disposal; if André rode through the town, Charles was always ambling by his side. He gave way to his whims, urged him to extravagances, and inflamed his angry passions: in a word, he was the good angel—or the bad one—who inspired his every thought and guided his every action.

Joan soon understood this business, and as a fact had expected it. She could have ruined Charles with a single word; but she scorned so base a revenge, and treated him with utter contempt. Thus the court was split into two factions: the Hunga-

rians with Friar Robert at their head and supported by Charles of Durazzo; on the other side all the nobility of Naples, led by the Princes of Tarentum. Joan, influenced by the grand seneschal's widow and her two daughters, the Countesses of Terlizzi and Morcone, and also by Doña Cancha and the Empress of Constantinople, took the side of the Neapolitan party against the pretensions of her husband. The partisans of the queen made it their first care to have her name inscribed upon all public acts without adding André's; but Joan, led by an instinct of right and justice amid all the corruption of her court, had only consented to this last after she had taken counsel with André d'Isernia, a very learned lawyer of the day, respected as much for his lofty character as for his great learning. The prince, annoyed at being shut out in this way, began to act in a violent and despotic manner. On his own authority he released prisoners; he showered favours upon Hungarians, and gave especial honours and rich gifts to Giovanni Pipino, Count of Altanuera, the enemy of all others most dreaded and detested by the Neapolitan barons. Then the Counts of San Severino, Mileto, Terlizzi and Balzo, Calanzaro and Sant' Angelo, and most of the grandees, exasperated by the haughty insolence of André's favourite, which grew every day more outrageous, decided that he must perish, and his mas-

ter with him, should he persist in attacking their privileges and defying their anger.

Moreover, the women who were about Joan at the court egged her on, each one urged by a private interest, in the pursuit of her fresh passion. Poor Joan, neglected by her husband and betrayed by Robert of Cabane, gave way beneath the burden of duties beyond her strength to bear, and fled for refuge to the arms of Bertrand of Artois, whose love she did not even attempt to resist; for every feeling for religion and virtue had been destroyed in her of set purpose, and her young inclinations had been early bent towards vice, just as the bodies of wretched children are bent and their bones broken by jugglers when they train them. Bertrand himself felt an adoration for her surpassing ordinary human passion. When he reached the summit of a happiness to which in his wildest dreams he had never dared to aspire, the young count nearly lost his reason. In vain had his father, Charles of Artois (who was Count of Aire, a direct descendant of Philip the Bold, and one of the regents of the kingdom), attempted by severe admonitions to stop him while yet on the brink of the precipice: Bertrand would listen to nothing but his love for Joan and his implacable hatred for all the queen's enemies. Many a time, at the close of day, as the breeze from Posilippo or Sorrento coming from far

away was playing in his hair, might Bertrand be seen leaning from one of the casements of Castel Nuovo, pale and motionless, gazing fixedly from his side of the square to where the Duke of Calabria and the Duke of Durazzo came galloping home from their evening ride side by side in a cloud of dust. Then the brows of the young count were violently contracted, a savage, sinister look shone in his blue eyes once so innocent, like lightning a thought of death and vengeance flashed into his mind; he would all at once begin to tremble, as a light hand was laid upon his shoulder; he would turn softly, fearing lest the divine apparition should vanish to the skies; but there beside him stood a young girl, with cheeks aflame and heaving breast, with brilliant liquid eyes: she had come to tell how her past day had been spent, and to offer her forehead for the kiss that should reward her labours and unwilling absence. This woman, dictator of laws and administrator of justice among grave magistrates and stern ministers, was but fifteen years old; this man, who knew her griefs, and to avenge them was meditating regicide, was not yet twenty: two children of earth, the playthings of an awful destiny!

Two months and a few days after the old king's death, on the morning of Friday the 28th of March of the same year, 1343, the widow of the grand

seneschal, Philippa, who had already contrived to get forgiven for the shameful trick she had used to secure all her son's wishes, entered the queen's apartments, excited by a genuine fear, pale and distracted, the bearer of news that spread terror and lamentation throughout the court: Marie, the queen's younger sister, had disappeared.

The gardens and outside courts had been searched for any trace of her; every corner of the castle had been examined; the guards had been threatened with torture, so as to drag the truth from them; no one had seen anything of the princess, and nothing could be found that suggested either flight or abduction. Joan, struck down by this new blow in the midst of other troubles, was for a time utterly prostrated; then, when she had recovered from her first surprise, she behaved as all people do if despair takes the place of reason: she gave orders for what was already done to be done again, she asked the same questions that could only bring the same answers, and poured forth vain regrets and unjust reproaches. The news spread through the town, causing the greatest astonishment: there arose a great commotion in the castle, and the members of the regency hastily assembled, while couriers were sent out in every direction, charged to promise 12,000 ducats to whomsoever should discover the place where the princess was concealed. Proceedings

were at once taken against the soldiers who were on guard at the fortress at the time of the disappearance.

Bertrand of Artois drew the queen apart, telling her his suspicions, which fell directly upon Charles of Durazzo; but Joan lost no time in persuading him of the improbability of his hypothesis: first of all, Charles had never once set his foot in Castel Nuovo since the day of his stormy interview with the queen, but had made a point of always leaving André by the bridge when he came to the town with him; besides, it had never been noticed, even in the past, that the young duke had spoken to Marie or exchanged looks with her: the result of all attainable evidence was, that no stranger had entered the castle the evening before except a notary named Master Nicholas of Melazzo, an old person, half silly, half fanatical, for whom Tommaso Pace, valet de chambre to the Duke of Calabria, was ready to answer with his life. Bertrand yielded to the queen's reasoning, and day by day advanced new suggestions, each less probable than the last, to draw his mistress on to feel a hope that he was far from feeling himself.

But a month later, and precisely on the morning of Monday the 30th of April, a strange and unexpected scene took place, an exhibition of boldness transcending all calculations. The Neapolitan peo-

ple were stupefied in astonishment, and the grief of Joan and her friends was changed to indignation. Just as the clock of San Giovanni struck twelve, the gate of the magnificent palace of the Durazzo flung open its folding doors, and there came forth to the sound of trumpets a double file of cavaliers on richly caparisoned horses, with the duke's arms on their shields. They took up their station round the house to prevent the people outside from disturbing a ceremony which was to take place before the eyes of an immense crowd, assembled suddenly, as by a miracle, upon the square. At the back of the court stood an altar, and upon the steps lay two crimson velvet cushions embroidered with the fleur-de-lys of France and the ducal crown. Charles came forward, clad in a dazzling dress, and holding by the hand the queen's sister, the Princess Marie, at that time almost thirteen years of age. She knelt down timidly on one of the cushions, and when Charles had done the same, the grand almoner of the Duras house asked the young duke solemnly what was his intention in appearing thus humbly before a minister of the Church. At these words Master Nicholas of Melazzo took his place on the left of the altar, and read in a firm, clear voice, first, the contract of marriage between Charles and Marie, and then the apostolic letters from His Holiness the sovereign pontiff, Clement VI, who in his own name removing

all obstacles that might impede the union, such as the age of the young bride and the degrees of affinity between the two parties, authorised his dearly beloved son Charles, Duke of Durazzo and Albania, to take in marriage the most illustrious Marie of Anjou, sister of Joan, Queen of Naples and Jerusalem, and bestowed his benediction on the pair.

The almoner then took the young girl's hand, and placing it in that of Charles, pronounced the prayers of the Church. Charles, turning half round to the people, said in a loud voice—

"Before God and man, this woman is my wife."

"And this man is my husband," said Marie, trembling.

"Long live the Duke and Duchess of Durazzo!" cried the crowd, clapping their hands. And the young pair, at once mounting two beautiful horses and followed by their cavaliers and pages, solemnly paraded through the town, and re-entered their palace to the sound of trumpets and cheering.

When this incredible news was brought to the queen, her first feeling was joy at the recovery of her sister; and when Bertrand of Artois was eager to head a band of barons and cavaliers and bent on falling upon the cortège to punish the traitor, Joan put up her hand to stop him with a very mournful look.

"Alas!" she said sadly, "it is too late. They

are legally married, for the head of the Church—who is moreover by my grandfather's will the head of our family—has granted his permission. I only pity my poor sister; I pity her for becoming so young the prey of a wretched man who sacrifices her to his own ambition, hoping by this marriage to establish a claim to the throne. O God! what a strange fate oppresses the royal house of Anjou! My father's early death in the midst of his triumphs; my mother's so quickly after; my sister and I, the sole offspring of Charles I, both before we are women grown fallen into the hands of cowardly men, who use us but as the stepping-stones of their ambition!" Joan fell back exhausted on her chair, a burning tear trembling on her eyelid.

"This is the second time," said Bertrand reproachfully, "that I have drawn my sword to avenge an insult offered to you, the second time I return it by your orders to the scabbard. But remember, Joan, the third time will not find me so docile, and then it will not be Robert of Cabane or Charles of Durazzo that I shall strike, but him who is the cause of all your misfortunes."

"Have mercy, Bertrand! do not you also speak these words; whenever this horrible thought takes hold of me, let me come to you: this threat of bloodshed that is drummed into my ears, this sinister vision that haunts my sight; let me come to you, be-

loved, and weep upon your bosom, beneath your breath cool my burning fancies, from your eyes draw some little courage to revive my perishing soul. Come, I am quite unhappy enough without needing to poison the future by an endless remorse. Tell me rather to forgive and to forget, speak not of hatred and revenge; show me one ray of hope amid the darkness that surrounds me; hold up my wavering feet, and push me not into the abyss."

Such altercations as this were repeated as often as any fresh wrong arose from the side of André or his party; and in proportion as the attacks made by Bertrand and his friends gained in vehemence—and we must add, in justice—so did Joan's objections weaken. The Hungarian rule, as it became more and more arbitrary and unbearable, irritated men's minds to such a point, that the people murmured in secret and the nobles proclaimed aloud their discontent. André's soldiers indulged in a libertinage which would have been intolerable in a conquered city: they were found everywhere brawling in the taverns or rolling about disgustingly drunk in the gutters; and the prince, far from rebuking such orgies, was accused of sharing them himself. His former tutor, who ought to have felt bound to drag him away from so ignoble a mode of life, rather strove to immerse him in degrading pleasures, so as to keep him out of business matters;

without suspecting it, he was hurrying on the denouement of the terrible drama that was being acted behind the scenes at Castel Nuovo. Robert's widow, Doña Sancha of Aragon, the good and sainted lady whom our readers may possibly have forgotten, as her family had done, seeing that God's anger was hanging over her house, and that no counsels, no tears or prayers of hers could avail to arrest it, after wearing mourning for her husband one whole year, according to her promise, had taken the veil at the convent of Santa Maria della Croce, and deserted the court and its follies and passions, just as the prophets of old, turning their back on some accursed city, would shake the dust from off their sandals and depart. Sancha's retreat was a sad omen, and soon the family dissensions, long with difficulty suppressed, sprang forth to open view; the storm that had been threatening from afar broke suddenly over the town, and the thunderbolt was shortly to follow.

On the last day of August 1344, Joan rendered homage to Americ, Cardinal of Saint Martin and legate of Clement VI, who looked upon the kingdom of Naples as being a fief of the Church ever since the time when his predecessors had presented it to Charles of Anjou, and overthrown and excommunicated the house of Suabia. For this solemn ceremony the church of Saint Clara was chosen, the

burial-place of Neapolitan kings, and but lately the tomb of the grandfather and father of the young queen, who reposed to right and left of the high altar. Joan, clad in the royal robe, with the crown upon her head, uttered her oath of fidelity between the hands of the apostolic legate in the presence of her husband, who stood behind her simply as a witness, just like the other princes of the blood. Among the prelates with their pontifical insignia who formed the brilliant following of the envoy, there stood the Archbishops of Pisa, Bari, Capua, and Brindisi, and the reverend fathers Ugolino, Bishop of Castella, and Philip, Bishop of Cavaillon, chancellor to the queen. All the nobility of Naples and Hungary were present at this ceremony, which debarred André from the throne in a fashion at once formal and striking. Thus, when they left the church the excited feelings of both parties made a crisis imminent, and such hostile glances, such threatening words were exchanged, that the prince, finding himself too weak to contend against his enemies, wrote the same evening to his mother, telling her that he was about to leave a country where from his infancy upwards he had experienced nothing but deceit and disaster.

Those who know a mother's heart will easily guess that Elizabeth of Poland was no sooner aware of the danger that threatened her son than she trav-

elled to Naples, arriving there before her coming was suspected. Rumour spread abroad that the Queen of Hungary had come to take her son away with her, and the unexpected event gave rise to strange comments: the fever of excitement now blazed up in another direction. The Empress of Constantinople, the Catanese, her two daughters, and all the courtiers, whose calculations were upset by André's departure, hurried to honour the arrival of the Queen of Hungary by offering a very cordial and respectful reception, with a view to showing her that, in the midst of a court so attentive and devoted, any isolation or bitterness of feeling on the young prince's part must spring from his pride, from an unwarrantable mistrust, and his naturally savage and untrained character. Joan received her husband's mother with so much proper dignity in her behaviour that, in spite of preconceived notions, Elizabeth could not help admiring the noble seriousness and earnest feeling she saw in her daughter-in-law. To make the visit more pleasant to an honoured guest, fêtes and tournaments were given, the barons vying with one another in display of wealth and luxury. The Empress of Constantinople, the Catanese, Charles of Duras and his young wife, all paid the utmost attention to the mother of the prince. Marie, who by reason of her extreme youth and gentleness of character had no share in any

intrigues, was guided quite as much by her natural feeling as by her husband's orders when she offered to the Queen of Hungary those marks of regard and affection that she might have felt for her own mother. In spite, however, of these protestations of respect and love, Elizabeth of Poland trembled for her son, and, obeying a maternal instinct, chose to abide by her original intention, believing that she should never feel safe until André was far away from a court in appearance so friendly but in reality so treacherous. The person who seemed most disturbed by the departure, and tried to hinder it by every means in his power, was Friar Robert. Immersed in his political schemes, bending over his mysterious plans with all the eagerness of a gambler who is on the point of gaining, the Dominican, who thought himself on the eve of a tremendous event, who by cunning, patience, and labour hoped to scatter his enemies and to reign as absolute autocrat, now falling suddenly from the edifice of his dream, stiffened himself by a mighty effort to stand and resist the mother of his pupil. But fear cried too loud in the heart of Elizabeth for all the reasonings of the monk to lull it to rest: to every argument he advanced she simply said that while her son was not king and had not entire unlimited power, it was imprudent to leave him exposed to his enemies. The monk, seeing that all was indeed lost and that he

could not contend against the fears of this woman, asked only the boon of three days' grace, at the end of which time, should a reply he was expecting have not arrived, he said he would not only give up his opposition to André's departure, but would follow himself, renouncing for ever a scheme to which he had sacrificed everything.

Towards the end of the third day, as Elizabeth was definitely making her preparations for departure, the monk entered radiant. Showing her a letter which he had just hastily broken open, he cried triumphantly—

"God be praised, madam! I can at last give you incontestable proofs of my active zeal and accurate foresight."

André's mother, after rapidly running through the document, turned her eyes on the monk with yet some traces of mistrust in her manner, not venturing to give way to her sudden joy.

"Yes, madam," said the monk, raising his head, his plain features lighted up by his glance of intelligence—"yes, madam, you will believe your eyes, perhaps, though you would never believe my words: this is not the dream of an active imagination, the hallucination of a credulous mind, the prejudice of a limited intellect; it is a plan slowly conceived, painfully worked out, my daily thought and my whole life's work. I have never ignored the fact that at

the court of Avignon your son had powerful enemies; but I knew also that on the very day I undertook a certain solemn engagement in the prince's name, an engagement to withdraw those laws that had caused coldness between the pope and Robert, who was in general so devoted to the Church, I knew very well that my offer would never be rejected, and this argument of mine I kept back for the last. See, madam, my calculations are correct; your enemies are put to shame and your son is triumphant."

Then turning to André, who was just coming in and stood dumbfounded at the threshold on hearing the last words, he added—

"Come, my son, our prayers are at last fulfilled: you are king."

"King!" repeated André, transfixed with joy, doubt, and amazement.

"King of Sicily and Jerusalem: yes, my lord; there is no need for you to read this document that brings the joyful, unexpected news. You can see it in your mother's tears; she holds out her arms to press you to her bosom; you can see it in the happiness of your old teacher; he falls on his knees at your feet to salute you by this title, which he would have paid for with his own blood had it been denied to you much longer."

"And yet," said Elizabeth, after a moment's

mournful reflection, "if I obey my presentiments, your news will make no difference to our plans for departure."

"Nay, mother," said André firmly, "you would not force me to quit the country to the detriment of my honour. If I have made you feel some of the bitterness and sorrow that have spoiled my own young days because of my cowardly enemies, it is not from a poor spirit, but because I was powerless, and knew it, to take any sort of striking vengeance for their secret insults, their crafty injuries, their underhand intrigues. It was not because my arm wanted strength, but because my head wanted a crown. I might have put an end to some of these wretched beings, the least dangerous maybe; but it would have been striking in the dark; the ring-leaders would have escaped, and I should never have really got to the bottom of their infernal plots. So I have silently eaten out my own heart in shame and indignation. Now that my sacred rights are recognised by the Church, you will see, my mother, how these terrible barons, the queen's counsellors, the governors of the kingdom, will lower their heads in the dust: for they are threatened with no sword and no struggle; no peer of their own is he who speaks, but the king; it is by him they are accused, by the law they shall be condemned, and shall suffer on the scaffold."

"O my beloved son," cried the queen in tears, "I never doubted your noble feelings or the justice of your claims; but when your life is in danger, to what voice can I listen but the voice of fear? what can move my counsels but the promptings of love?"

"Mother, believe me, if the hands and hearts alike of these cowards had not trembled, you would have lost your son long ago."

"It is not violence that I fear, my son, it is treachery."

"My life, like every man's, belongs to God, and the lowest of sbirri may take it as I turn the corner of the street; but a king owes something to his people."

The poor mother long tried to bend the resolution of André by reason and entreaties; but when she had spoken her last word and shed her last tear, she summoned Bertram de Baux, chief-justice of the kingdom, and Marie, Duchess of Durazzo. Trusting in the old man's wisdom and the girl's innocence, she commended her son to them in the tenderest and most affecting words; then drawing from her own hand a ring richly wrought, and taking the prince aside, she slipped it upon his finger, saying in a voice that trembled with emotion as she pressed him to her heart—

"My son, as you refuse to come with me, here is a wonderful talisman, which I would not use be-

fore the last extremity. So long as you wear this ring on your finger, neither sword nor poison will have power against you."

"You see then, mother," said the prince, smiling, "with this protection there is no reason at all to fear for my life."

There are other dangers than sword or poison," sighed the queen.

"Be calm, mother: the best of all talismans is your prayer to God for me: it is the tender thought of you that will keep me for ever in the path of duty and justice; your maternal love will watch over me from afar, and cover me like the wings of a guardian angel."

Elizabeth sobbed as she embraced her son, and when she left him she felt her heart was breaking. At last she made up her mind to go, and was escorted by the whole court, who had never changed towards her for a moment in their chivalrous and respectful devotion. The poor mother, pale, trembling, and faint, leaned heavily upon André's arm, lest she should fall. On the ship that was to take her for ever from her son, she cast her arms for the last time about his neck, and there hung a long time, speechless, tearless, and motionless; when the signal for departure was given, her women took her in their arms half swooning. André stood on the shore with the feeling of death at his heart: his

eyes were fixed upon the sail that carried ever farther from him the only being he loved in the world. Suddenly he fancied he beheld something white moving a long way off: his mother had recovered her senses by a great effort, and had dragged herself up to the bridge to give a last signal of farewell: the unhappy lady knew too well that she would never see her son again.

At almost the same moment that André's mother left the kingdom, the former queen of Naples, Robert's widow, Doña Sancha, breathed her last sigh. She was buried in the convent of Santa Maria della Croce, under the name of Clara, which she had assumed on taking her vows as a nun, as her epitaph tells us, as follows:—

"Here lies, an example of great humility, the body of the sainted sister Clara, of illustrious memory, otherwise Sancha, Queen of Sicily and Jerusalem, widow of the most serene Robert, King of Jerusalem and Sicily, who, after the death of the king her husband, when she had completed a year of widowhood, exchanged goods temporary for goods eternal. Adopting for the love of God a voluntary poverty, and distributing her goods to the poor, she took upon her the rule of obedience in this celebrated convent of Santa Croce, the work of her own hands, in the year 1344, on the 21st of January of the twelfth indiction, where, living a life of

holiness under the rule of the blessed Francis, father of the poor, she ended her days religiously in the year of our Lord 1345, on the 28th of July of the thirteenth indiction. On the day following she was buried in this tomb."

The death of Doña Sancha served to hasten on the catastrophe which was to stain the throne of Naples with blood: one might almost fancy that God wished to spare this angel of love and resignation the sight of so terrible a spectacle; that she offered herself as a propitiatory sacrifice to redeem the crimes of her family.

## CHAPTER IV

EIGHT days after the funeral of the old queen, Bertrand of Artois came to Joan, distraught, dishevelled, in a state of agitation and confusion impossible to describe.

Joan went quickly up to her lover, asking him with a look of fear to explain the cause of his distress.

"I told you, madam," cried the young baron excitedly, "you will end by ruining us all, as you will never take any advice from me."

"For God's sake, Bertrand, speak plainly: what has happened? What advice have I neglected?"

"Madam, your noble husband, André of Hungary, has just been made King of Jerusalem and Sicily, and acknowledged by the court of Avignon, so henceforth you will be no better than his slave."

"Count of Artois, you are dreaming."

"No, madam, I am not dreaming: I have this fact to prove the truth of my words, that the pope's ambassadors are arrived at Capua with the bull for his coronation, and if they do not enter Castel Nuovo this very evening, the delay is only to give the new king time to make his preparations."

The queen bent her head as if a thunderbolt had fallen at her feet.

"When I told you before," said the count, with growing fury, "that we ought to use force to make a stand against him, that we ought to break the yoke of this infamous tyranny and get rid of the man before he had the means of hurting you, you always drew back in childish fear, with a woman's cowardly hesitation."

Joan turned a tearful look upon her lover.

"God, my God!" she cried, clasping her hands in desperation, "am I to hear for ever this awful cry of death! You too, Bertrand, you too say the word, like Robert of Cabane, like Charles of Duras? Wretched man, why would you raise this bloody spectre between us, to check with icy hand our adulterous kisses? Enough of such crimes; if his wretched ambition makes him long to reign, let him be king: what matters his power to me, if he leaves me with your love?"

"It is not so sure that our love will last much longer."

"What is this, Bertrand? You rejoice in this merciless torture."

"I tell you, madam, that the King of Naples has a black flag ready, and on the day of his coronation it will be carried before him."

"And you believe," said Joan, pale as a corpse

in its shroud,—"you believe that this flag is a threat?"

"Ay, and the threat begins to be put in execution."

The queen staggered, and leaned against a table to save herself from falling.

"Tell me all," she cried in a choking voice; "fear not to shock me; see, I am not trembling. O Bertrand, I entreat you!"

"The traitors have begun with the man you most esteemed, the wisest counsellor of the crown, the best of magistrates, the noblest-hearted, most rigidly virtuous——"

"Andrea of Isernia!"

"Madam, he is no more."

Joan uttered a cry, as though the noble old man had been slain before her eyes: she respected him as a father; then, sinking back, she remained profoundly silent.

"How did they kill him?" she asked at last, fixing her great eyes in terror on the count.

"Yesterday evening, as he left this castle, on the way to his own home, a man suddenly sprang out upon him before the Porta Petruccia: it was one of André's favourites, Conrad of Gottis chosen no doubt because he had a grievance against the incorruptible magistrate on account of some sentence passed against him, and the murder would there-

fore be put down to motives of private revenge. The cowardly wretch gave a sign to two or three companions, who surrounded the victim and robbed him of all means of escape. The poor old man looked fixedly at his assassin, and asked him what he wanted. 'I want you to lose your life at my hands, as I lost my case at yours!' cried the murderer; and leaving him no time to answer, he ran him through with his sword. Then the rest fell upon the poor man, who did not even try to call for help, and his body was riddled with wounds and horribly mutilated, and then left bathed in its blood."

"Terrible!" murmured the queen, covering her face.

"It was only their first effort: the proscription lists are already full: André must needs have blood to celebrate his accession to the throne of Naples. And do you know, Joan, whose name stands first in the doomed list?"

"Whose?" cried the queen, shuddering from head to foot.

"Mine," said the count calmly.

"Yours!" cried Joan, drawing herself up to her full height; "are you to be killed next! Oh, be careful, André; you have pronounced your own death-sentence. Long have I turned aside the dagger pointing to your breast, but you put an end to all my patience. Woe to you, Prince of Hungary!

the blood which you have spilt shall fall on your own head."

As she spoke she had lost her pallor: her lovely face was fired with revenge, her eyes flashed lightning. This child of sixteen was terrible to behold: she pressed her lover's hand with convulsive tenderness, and clung to him as if she would screen him with her own body.

"Your anger is awakened too late," said he gently and sadly; for at this moment Joan seemed so lovely that he could reproach her with nothing. "You do not know that his mother has left him a talisman preserving him from sword and poison?"

"He will die," said Joan firmly: the smile that lighted up her face was so unnatural that the count was dismayed, and dropped his eyes.

The next day the young Queen of Naples, lovelier, more smiling than ever, sitting carelessly in a graceful attitude beside a window which looked out on the magnificent view of the bay, was busy weaving a cord of silk and gold. The sun had run nearly two-thirds of his fiery course, and was gradually sinking his rays in the clear blue waters where Posilippo's head is reflected with its green and flowery crown. A warm, balmy breeze that had passed over the orange trees of Sorrento and Amalfi felt deliciously refreshing to the inhabitants of the capital, who had succumbed to torpor in the enervating

softness of the day. The whole town was waking from a long siesta, breathing freely after a sleepy interval: the Molo was covered with a crowd of eager people dressed out in the brightest colours; the many cries of a festival, joyous songs, love ditties sounded from all quarters of the vast amphitheatre, which is one of the chief marvels of creation: they came to the ears of Joan, and she listened as she bent over her work, absorbed in deep thought. Suddenly, when she seemed most busily occupied, the indefinable feeling of someone near at hand, and the touch of something on her shoulder, made her start: she turned as though waked from a dream by contact with a serpent, and perceived her husband, magnificently dressed, carelessly leaning against the back of her chair. For a long time past the prince had not come to his wife in this familiar fashion, and to the queen the pretence of affection and careless behaviour augured ill. André did not appear to notice the look of hatred and terror that had escaped Joan in spite of herself, and assuming the best expression of gentleness as that his straight hard features could contrive to put on in such circumstances as these, he smilingly asked—

"Why are you making this pretty cord, dear dutiful wife?"

"To hang you with, my lord," replied the queen, with a smile.

André shrugged his shoulders, seeing in the threat so incredibly rash nothing more than a pleasantry in rather bad taste. But when he saw that Joan resumed her work, he tried to renew the conversation.

"I admit," he said, in a perfectly calm voice, "that my question is quite unnecessary: from your eagerness to finish this handsome piece of work, I ought to suspect that it is destined for some fine knight of yours whom you propose to send on a dangerous enterprise wearing your colours. If so, my fair queen, I claim to receive my orders from your lips: appoint the time and place for the trial, and I am sure beforehand of carrying off a prize that I shall dispute with all your adorers."

"That is not so certain," said Joan, "if you are as valiant in war as in love." And she cast on her husband a look at once seductive and scornful, beneath which the young man blushed up to his eyes.

"I hope," said André, repressing his feelings,—"I hope soon to give you such proofs of my affection that you will never doubt it again."

"And what makes you fancy that, my lord?"

"I would tell you, if you would listen seriously."

"I am listening."

"Well, it is a dream I had last night that gives me such confidence in the future."

"A dream! You surely ought to explain that."

"I dreamed that there was a grand fête in the town: an immense crowd filled the streets like an overflowing torrent, and the heavens were ringing with their shouts of joy; the gloomy granite façades were hidden by hangings of silk and festoons of flowers, the churches were decorated as though for some grand ceremony. I was riding side by side with you." Joan made a haughty movement. "Forgive me, madam, it was only a dream: I was on your right, riding a fine white horse, magnificently caparisoned, and the chief-justice of the kingdom carried before me a flag unfolded in sign of honour. After riding in triumph through the main thoroughfares of the city, we arrived, to the sound of trumpets and clarions, at the royal church of Saint Clara, where your grandfather and my uncle are buried, and there, before the high altar, the pope's ambassador laid your hand in mine and pronounced a long discourse, and then on our two heads in turn placed the crown of Jerusalem and Sicily; after which the nobles and the people shouted in one voice, 'Long live the King and Queen of Naples!' And I, wishing to perpetuate the memory of so glorious a day, proceeded to create knights among the most zealous in our court."

"And do you not remember the names of the chosen persons whom you judged worthy of your royal favours?"

"Assuredly, madam: Bertrand, Count of Artois——"

"Enough, my lord; I excuse you from naming the rest: I always supposed you were loyal and generous, but you give me fresh proof of it by showing favour to men whom I most honour and trust. I cannot tell if your wishes are likely soon to be realised, but in any case feel sure of my perpetual gratitude."

Joan's voice did not betray the slightest emotion; her look had become kind, and the sweetest smile was on her lips. But in her heart André's death was from that moment decided upon. The prince, too much preoccupied with his own projects of vengeance, and too confident in his all-powerful talisman and his personal valour, had no suspicion that his plans could be anticipated. He conversed a long time with his wife in a chatting, friendly way, trying to spy out her secret, and exposing his own by his interrupted phrases and mysterious reserves. When he fancied that every cloud of former resentment, even the lightest, had disappeared from Joan's brow, he begged her to go with her suite on a magnificent hunting expedition that he was organising for the 20th of August, adding that such a kindness on her part would be for him a sure pledge of their reconciliation and complete forgetfulness of the past. Joan promised with a charming grace, and

the prince retired fully satisfied with the interview, carrying with him the conviction that he had only to threaten to strike a blow at the queen's favourite to ensure her obedience, perhaps even her love.

But on the eve of the 20th of August a strange and terrible scene was being enacted in the basement storey of one of the lateral towers of Castel Nuovo. Charles of Durazzo, who had never ceased to brood secretly over his infernal plans, had been informed by the notary whom he had charged to spy upon the conspirators, that on that particular evening they were about to hold a decisive meeting, and therefore, wrapped in a black cloak, he glided into the underground corridor and hid himself behind a pillar, there to await the issue of the conference. After two dreadful hours of suspense, every second marked out by the beating of his heart, Charles fancied he heard the sound of a door very carefully opened; the feeble ray of a lantern in the vault scarcely served to dispel the darkness, but a man coming away from the wall approached him walking like a living statue. Charles gave a slight cough, the sign agreed upon. The man put out his light and hid away the dagger he had drawn in case of a surprise.

"Is it you, Master Nicholas?" asked the duke in a low voice.

"It is I, my lord."

"What is it?"

"They have just fixed the prince's death for to-morrow, on his way to the hunt."

"Did you recognise every conspirator?"

"Every one, though their faces were masked; when they gave their vote for death, I knew them by their voices."

"Could you point out to me who they are?"

"Yes, this very minute; they are going to pass along at the end of this corridor. And see, here is Tommaso Pace walking in front of them to light their way."

Indeed, a tall spectral figure, black from head to foot, his face carefully hidden under a velvet mask, walked at the end of the corridor, lamp in hand, and stopped at the first step of a staircase which led to the upper floors. The conspirators advanced slowly, two by two, like a procession of ghosts, appeared for one moment in the circle of light made by the torch, and again disappeared into shadow.

"See, there are Charles and Bertrand of Artois," said the notary; "there are the Counts of Terlizzi and Catanzaro; the grand admiral and grand seneschal, Godfrey of Marsan, Count of Squillace, and Robert of Cabane, Count of Eboli; the two women talking in a low voice with the eager gesticulations

are Catherine of Tarentum, Empress of Constantinople, and Philippa the Catanese, the queen's governess and chief lady; there is Doña Cancha, chamberwoman and confidante of Joan; and there is the Countess of Morcone——"

The notary stopped on beholding a shadow alone, its head bowed, with arms hanging loosely, choking back her sobs beneath a hood of black.

"Who is the woman who seems to drag herself so painfully along in their train?" asked the duke, pressing his companion's arm.

"That woman," said the notary, "is the queen."

"Ah, now I see," thought Charles, breathing freely, with the same sort of satisfaction that Satan no doubt feels when a long coveted soul falls at length into his power.

"And now, my lord," continued Master Nicholas, when all had returned once more into silence and darkness, "if you have bidden me spy on these conspirators with a view to saving the young prince you are protecting with love and vigilance, you must hurry forward, for to-morrow maybe it will be too late."

"Follow me," cried the duke imperiously; "it is time you should know my real intention, and then carry out my orders with scrupulous exactness."

With these words he drew him aside to a place opposite to where the conspirators had just dis-

appeared. The notary mechanically followed through a labyrinth of dark corridors and secret staircases, quite at a loss how to account for the sudden change that had come over his master: crossing one of the ante-chambers in the castle, they came upon André, who joyfully accosted them; grasping the hand of his cousin Duras in his affectionate manner, he asked him in a pressing way that would brook no refusal, "Will you be of our hunting party to-morrow, duke?"

"Excuse me, my lord," said Charles, bowing down to the ground; "it will be impossible for me to go to-morrow, for my wife is very unwell; but I entreat you to accept the best falcon I have."

And here he cast upon the notary a petrifying glance.

The morning of the 20th of August was fine and calm—the irony of nature contrasting cruelly with the fate of mankind. From break of day masters and valets, pages and knights, princes and courtiers, all were on foot; cries of joy were heard on every side when the queen arrived, on a snow-white horse, at the head of the young and brilliant throng. Joan was perhaps paler than usual, but that might be because she had been obliged to rise very early. André, mounted on one of the most fiery of all the steeds he had tamed, galloped beside his wife, noble and proud, happy in his own powers, his youth, and

the thousand gilded hopes that a brilliant future seemed to offer. Never had the court of Naples shown so brave an aspect: every feeling of distrust and hatred seemed entirely forgotten; Friar Robert himself, suspicious as he was by nature, when he saw the joyous cavalcade go by under his window, looked out with pride, and stroking his beard, laughed at his own seriousness.

André's intention was to spend several days hunting between Capua and Aversa, and only to return to Naples when all was in readiness for his coronation. Thus the first day they hunted round about Melito, and went through two or three villages in the land of Labore. Towards evening the court stopped at Aversa, with a view to passing the night there, and since at that period there was no castle in the place worthy of entertaining the queen with her husband and numerous court, the convent of St. Peter's at Majella was converted into a royal residence: this convent had been built by Charles II in the year of our Lord 1309.

While the grand seneschal was giving orders for supper and the preparation of a room for André and his wife, the prince, who during the whole day had abandoned himself entirely to his favourite amusement, went up on the terrace to enjoy the evening air, accompanied by the good Isolda, his beloved nurse, who loved him more even than his

mother, and would not leave his side for a moment. Never had the prince appeared so animated and happy: he was in ecstasies over the beauty of the country, the clear air, the scent of the trees around; he besieged his nurse with a thousand queries, never waiting for an answer; and they were indeed long in coming, for poor Isolda was gazing upon him with that appearance of fascination which makes a mother absent-minded when her child is talking. André was eagerly telling her about a terrible boar he had chased that morning across the woods, how it had lain foaming at his feet, and Isolda interrupted him to say he had a grain of dust in his eye. Then André was full of his plans for the future, and Isolda stroked his fair hair, remarking that he must be feeling very tired. Then, heeding nothing but his own joy and excitement, the young prince hurled defiance at destiny, calling by all his gods on dangers to come forward, so that he might have the chance of quelling them, and the poor nurse exclaimed, in a flood of tears, "My child, you love me no longer."

Out of all patience with these constant interruptions, André scolded her kindly enough, and mocked at her childish fears. Then, paying no attention to a sort of melancholy that was coming over him, he bade her tell him old tales of his childhood, and had a long talk about his brother Louis, his absent

mother, and tears were in his eyes when he recalled her last farewell. Isolda listened joyfully, and answered all he asked; but no fell presentiment shook her heart: the poor woman loved André with all the strength of her soul; for him she would have given up her life in this world and in the world to come; yet she was not his mother.

When all was ready, Robert of Cabane came to tell the prince that the queen awaited him; André cast one last look at the smiling fields beneath the starry heavens, pressed his nurse's hand to his lips and to his heart, and followed the grand seneschal slowly and, it seemed, with some regret. But soon the brilliant lights of the room, the wine that circulated freely, the gay talk, the eager recitals of that day's exploits, served to disperse the cloud of gloom that had for a moment overspread the countenance of the prince. The queen alone, leaning on the table, with fixed eyes and lips that never moved, sat at this strange feast pale and cold as a baleful ghost summoned from the tomb to disturb the joy of the party. André, whose brain began to be affected by the draughts of wine from Capri and Syracuse, was annoyed at his wife's look, and attributing it to contempt, filled a goblet to the brim and presented it to the queen. Joan visibly trembled, her lips moved convulsively; but the conspirators drowned in their noisy talk the involuntary

groan that escaped her. In the midst of a general uproar, Robert of Cabane proposed that they should serve generous supplies of the same wine drunk at the royal table to the Hungarian guards who were keeping watch at the approaches to the convent, and this liberality evoked frenzied applause. The shouting of the soldiers soon gave witness to their gratitude for the unexpected gift, and mingled with the hilarious toasts of the banqueters. To put the finishing touch to André's excitement, there were cries on every side of "Long live the Queen! Long live His Majesty the King of Naples!"

The orgy lasted far into the night: the pleasures of the next day were discussed with enthusiasm, and Bertrand of Artois protested in a loud voice that if they were so late now some would not rise early on the morrow. André declared that, for his part, an hour or two's rest would be enough to get over his fatigue, and he eagerly protested that it would be well for others to follow his example. The Count of Terlizzi seemed to express some doubt as to the prince's punctuality. André insisted, and challenging all the barons present to see who would be up first, he retired with the queen to the room that had been reserved for them, where he very soon fell into a deep and heavy sleep. About two o'clock in the morning, Tommaso Pace, the prince's valet and first usher of the royal apartments, knocked at his

master's door to rouse him for the chase. At the first knock, all was silence; at the second, Joan, who had not closed her eyes all night, moved as if to rouse her husband and warn him of the threatened danger; but at the third knock the unfortunate young man suddenly awoke, and hearing in the next room sounds of laughter and whispering, fancied that they were making a joke of his laziness, and jumped out of bed bareheaded, in nothing but his shirt, his shoes half on and half off. He opened the door; and at this point we translate literally the account of Domenico Gravina, a historian of much esteem. As soon as the prince appeared, the conspirators all at once fell upon him, to strangle him with their hands; believing he could not die by poison or sword, because of the charmed ring given him by his poor mother. But André was so strong and active, that when he perceived the infamous treason he defended himself with more than human strength, and with dreadful cries got free from his murderers, his face all bloody, his fair hair pulled out in handfuls. The unhappy young man tried to gain his own bedroom, so as to get some weapon and valiantly resist the assassins; but as he reached the door, Nicholas of Melazzo, putting his dagger like a bolt into the lock, stopped his entrance. The prince, calling aloud the whole time and imploring the protection of his friends, returned to the hall;

but all the doors were shut, and no one held out a helping hand; for the queen was silent, showing no uneasiness about her husband's death.

But the nurse Isolda, terrified by the shouting of her beloved son and lord, leapt from her bed and went to the window, filling the house with dreadful cries. The traitors, alarmed by the mighty uproar, although the place was lonely and so far from the centre of the town that nobody could have come to see what the noise was, were on the point of letting their victim go, when Bertrand of Artois, who felt he was more guilty than the others, seized the prince with hellish fury round the waist, and after a desperate struggle got him down; then dragging him by the hair of his head to a balcony which gave upon the garden, and pressing one knee upon his chest, cried out to the others—

"Come here, barons: I have what we want to strangle him with."

And round his neck he passed a long cord of silk and gold, while the wretched man struggled all he could. Bertrand quickly drew up the knot, and the others threw the body over the parapet of the balcony, leaving it hanging between earth and sky until death ensued. When the Count of Terlizzi averted his eyes from the horrid spectacle, Robert of Cabane cried out imperiously—

"What are you doing there? The cord is long

enough for us all to hold: we want not witnesses, we want accomplices!"

As soon as the last convulsive movements of the dying man had ceased, they let the corpse drop the whole height of the three storeys, and opening the doors of the hall, departed as though nothing had happened.

Isolda, when at last she contrived to get a light, rapidly ran to the queen's chamber, and finding the door shut on the inside, began to call loudly on her André. There was no answer, though the queen was in the room. The poor nurse, distracted, trembling, desperate, ran down all the corridors, knocked at all the cells and woke the monks one by one, begging them to help her look for the prince. The monks said that they had indeed heard a noise, but thinking it was a quarrel between soldiers drunken perhaps or mutinous, they had not thought it their business to interfere. Isolda eagerly entreated: the alarm spread through the convent; the monks followed the nurse, who went on before with a torch. She entered the garden, saw something white upon the grass, advanced trembling, gave one piercing cry, and fell backward.

The wretched André was lying in his blood, a cord round his neck as though he were a thief, his head crushed in by the height from which he fell. Then two monks went upstairs to the queen's room,

and respectfully knocking at the door, asked in sepulchral tones—

"Madam, what would you have us do with your husband's corpse?"

And when the queen made no answer, they went down again slowly to the garden, and kneeling one at the head, the other at the foot of the dead man, they began to recite penitential psalms in a low voice. When they had spent an hour in prayer, two other monks went up in the same way to Joan's chamber, repeating the same question and getting no answer, whereupon they relieved the first two, and began themselves to pray. Next a third couple went to the door of this inexorable room, and coming away perturbed by their want of success, perceived that there was a disturbance of people outside the convent, while vengeful cries were heard amongst the indignant crowd. The groups became more and more thronged, threatening voices were raised, a torrent of invaders threatened the royal dwelling, when the queen's guard appeared, lance in readiness, and a litter closely shut, surrounded by the principal barons of the court, passed through the crowd, which stood stupidly gazing. Joan, wrapped in a black veil, went back to Castel Nuovo, amid her escort; and nobody, say the historians, had the courage to say a word about this terrible deed.

"To hang you with, my lord," replied the Queen, with a smile

—p. 1865

*From the original illustration by L. Boulanger*

## CHAPTER V

THE terrible part that Charles of Durazzo was to play began as soon as this crime was accomplished. The duke left the corpse two whole days exposed to the wind and the rain, unburied and dishonoured, the corpse of a man whom the pope had made King of Sicily and Jerusalem, so that the indignation of the mob might be increased by the dreadful sight. On the third he ordered it to be conveyed with the utmost pomp to the cathedral of Naples, and assembling all the Hungarians around the catafalque, he thus addressed them, in a voice of thunder:—

"Nobles and commoners, behold our king hanged like a dog by infamous traitors. God will soon make known to us the names of all the guilty: let those who desire that justice may be done hold up their hands and swear against murderers bloody persecution, implacable hatred, everlasting vengeance!"

It was this one man's cry that brought death and desolation to the murderers' hearts, and the people dispersed about the town, shrieking, "Vengeance, vengeance!"

Divine justice, which knows naught of privilege and respects no crown, struck Joan first of all in her love. When the two lovers first met, both were seized alike with terror and disgust; they recoiled trembling, the queen seeing in Bertrand her husband's executioner, and he in her the cause of his crime, possibly of his speedy punishment. Bertrand's looks were disordered, his cheeks hollow, his eyes encircled with black rings, his mouth horribly distorted; his arm and forefinger extended towards his accomplice, he seemed to behold a frightful vision rising before him. The same cord he had used when he strangled André, he now saw round the queen's neck, so tight that it made its way into her flesh: an invisible force, a Satanic impulse, urged him to strangle with his own hands the woman he had loved so dearly, had at one time adored on his knees. The count rushed out of the room with gestures of desperation, muttering incoherent words; and as he shewed plain signs of mental aberration, his father, Charles of Artois, took him away, and they went that same evening to their palace of St. Agatha, and there prepared a defence in case they should be attacked.

But Joan's punishment, which was destined to be slow as well as dreadful, to last thirty-seven years and end in a ghastly death, was now only beginning. All the wretched beings who were stained

with André's death came in turn to her to demand the price of blood. The Catanese and her son, who held in their hands not only the queen's honour but her life, now became doubly greedy and exacting. Doña Cancha no longer put any bridle on her licentiousness; and the Empress of Constantinople ordered her niece to marry her eldest son, Robert, Prince of Tarentum. Joan, consumed by remorse, full of indignation and shame at the arrogant conduct of her subjects, dared scarcely lift her head, and stooped to entreaties, only stipulating for a few days' delay before giving her answer: the empress consented, on condition that her son should come to reside at Castel Nuovo, with permission to see the queen once a day. Joan bowed her head in silence, and Robert of Tarentum was installed at the castle.

Charles of Durazzo, who by the death of André had practically become the head of the family, and would, by the terms of his grandfather's will, inherit the kingdom by right of his wife Marie in the case of Joan's dying without lawful issue, sent to the queen two commands: first, that she should not dream of contracting a new marriage without first consulting him in the choice of a husband; secondly, that she should invest him at once with the title of Duke of Calabria. To compel his cousin to make these two concessions, he added that if she should

be so ill advised as to refuse either of them, he should hand over to justice the proofs of the crime and the names of the murderers. Joan, bending beneath the weight of this new difficulty, could think of no way to avoid it; but Catherine, who alone was stout enough to fight this nephew of hers, insisted that they must strike at the Duke of Durazzo in his ambition and hopes, and tell him, to begin with—what was the fact—that the queen was pregnant. If, in spite of this news, he persisted in his plans, she would find some means or other, she said, of causing trouble and discord in her nephew's family, and wounding him in his most intimate affections or closest interests, by publicly dishonouring him through his wife or his mother.

Charles smiled coldly when his aunt came to tell him from the queen that she was about to bring into the world an infant, André's posthumous child. What importance could a babe yet unborn possibly have—as a fact, it lived only a few months—in the eyes of a man who with such admirable coolness got rid of people who stood in his way, and that moreover by the hand of his own enemies? He told the empress that the happy news she had condescended to bring him in person, far from diminishing his kindness towards his cousin, inspired him rather with more interest and goodwill; that consequently he reiterated his suggestion, and renewed

his promise not to seek vengeance for his dear André, since in a certain sense the crime was not complete should a child be destined to survive; but in case of a refusal he declared himself inexorable. He cleverly gave Catherine to understand that, as she had some interest herself in the prince's death, she ought for her own sake to persuade the queen to stop legal proceedings.

The empress seemed to be deeply impressed by her nephew's threatening attitude, and promised to do her best to persuade the queen to grant all he asked, on condition, however, that Charles should allow the necessary time for carrying through so delicate a business. But Catherine profited by this delay to think out her own plan of revenge, and ensure the means of certain success. After starting several projects eagerly and then regretfully abandoning them, she fixed upon an infernal and unheard-of scheme, which the mind would refuse to believe but for the unanimous testimony of historians. Poor Agnes of Duras, Charles's mother, had for some few days been suffering with an inexplicable weariness, a slow painful malady with which her son's restlessness and violence may have had not a little to do. The empress resolved that the first effect of her hatred was to fall upon this unhappy mother. She summoned the Count of Terlizzi and Doña Cancha, his mistress, who by the

queen's orders had been attending Agnes since her illness began. Catherine suggested to the young chamberwoman, who was at that time with child, that she should deceive the doctor by representing that certain signs of her own condition really belonged to the sick woman, so that he, deceived by the false indications, should be compelled to admit to Charles of Durazzo that his mother was guilty and dishonoured. The Count of Terlizzi, who ever since he had taken part in the regicide trembled in fear of discovery, had nothing to oppose to the empress's desire, and Doña Cancha, whose head was as light as her heart was corrupt, seized with a foolish gaiety on any chance of taking her revenge on the prudery of the only princess of the blood who led a pure life at a court that was renowned for its depravity. Once assured that her accomplices would be prudent and obedient, Catherine began to spread abroad certain vague and dubious but terribly serious rumours, only needing proof, and soon after the cruel accusation was started it was repeated again and again in confidence, until it reached the ears of Charles.

At this amazing revelation the duke was seized with a fit of trembling. He sent instantly for the doctor, and asked imperiously what was the cause of his mother's malady. The doctor turned pale and stammered; but when Charles grew threaten-

ing he admitted that he had certain grounds for suspecting that the duchess was *enceinte,* but as he might easily have been deceived the first time, he would make a second investigation before pronouncing his opinion in so serious a matter. The next day, as the doctor came out of the bedroom, the duke met him, and interrogating him with an agonised gesture, could only judge by the silence that his fears were too well confirmed. But the doctor, with excess of caution, declared that he would make a third trial. Condemned criminals can suffer no worse than Charles in the long hours that passed before that fatal moment when he learned that his mother was indeed guilty. On the third day the doctor stated on his soul and conscience that Agnes of Durazzo was pregnant.

"Very good," said Charles, dismissing the doctor with no sign of emotion.

That evening the duchess took a medicine ordered by the doctor; and when, half an hour later, she was assailed with violent pains, the duke was warned that perhaps other physicians ought to be consulted, as the prescription of the ordinary doctor, instead of bringing about an improvement in her state, had only made her worse.

Charles slowly went up to the duchess's room, and sending away all the people who were standing round her bed, on the pretext that they were clumsy

and made his mother worse, he shut the door, and they were alone. The poor Agnes, forgetting her internal agony when she saw her son, pressed his hand tenderly and smiled through her tears.

Charles, pale beneath his bronzed complexion, his forehead moist with a cold sweat, and his eyes horribly dilated, bent over the sick woman and asked her gloomily—

"Are you a little better, mother?"

"Ah, I am in pain, in frightful pain, my poor Charles. I feel as though I have molten lead in my veins. O my son, call your brothers, so that I may give you all my blessing for the last time, for I cannot hold out long against this pain. I am burning. Mercy! Call a doctor: I know I have been poisoned."

Charles did not stir from the bedside.

"Water!" cried the dying woman in a broken voice,—"water! A doctor, a confessor! My children—I want my children!"

And as the duke paid no heed, but stood moodily silent, the poor mother, prostrated by pain, fancied that grief had robbed her son of all power of speech or movement, and so, by a desperate effort, sat up, and seizing him by the arm, cried with all the strength she could muster —

"Charles, my son, what is it? My poor boy, courage; it is nothing, I hope. But quick, call for

help, call a doctor. Ah, you have no idea of what I suffer."

"Your doctor," said Charles slowly and coldly, each word piercing his mother's heart like a dagger, —"your doctor cannot come."

"Oh why?" asked Agnes, stupefied.

"Because no one ought to live who knows the secret of our shame."

"Unhappy man!" she cried, overwhelmed with pain and terror, "you have murdered him! Perhaps you have poisoned your mother too! Charles, Charles, have mercy on your own soul!"

"It is your doing," said Charles, without show of emotion: "you have driven me into crime and despair; you have caused my dishonour in this world and my damnation in the next."

"What are you saying? My own Charles, have mercy! Do not let me die in this horrible uncertainty; what fatal delusion is blinding you? Speak, my son, speak: I am not feeling the poison now. What have I done? Of what have I been accused?"

She looked with haggard eyes at her son: her maternal love still struggled against the awful thought of matricide; at last, seeing that Charles remained speechless in spite of her entreaties, she repeated, with a piercing cry—

"Speak, in God's name, speak before I die!"

"Mother, you are with child."

"What!" cried Agnes, with a loud cry, which broke her very heart. "O God, forgive him! Charles, your mother forgives and blesses you in death."

Charles fell upon her neck, desperately crying for help: he would now have gladly saved her at the cost of his life, but it was too late. He uttered one cry that came from his heart, and was found stretched out upon his mother's corpse.

Strange comments were made at the court on the death of the Duchess of Durazzo and her doctor's disappearance; but there was no doubt at all that grief and gloom were furrowing wrinkles on Charles's brow, which was already sad enough. Catherine alone knew the terrible cause of her nephew's depression, for to her it was very plain that the duke at one blow had killed his mother and her physician. But she had never expected a reaction so sudden and violent in a man who shrank before no crime. She had thought Charles capable of everything except remorse. His gloomy, self-absorbed silence seemed a bad augury for her plans. She had desired to cause trouble for him in his own family, so that he might have no time to oppose the marriage of her son with the queen; but she had shot beyond her mark, and Charles, started thus on the terrible path of crime, had now broken through the bonds of his holiest affections, and gave himself

up to his bad passions with feverish ardour and a savage desire for revenge. Then Catherine had recourse to gentleness and submission. She gave her son to understand that there was only one way of obtaining the queen's hand, and that was by flattering the ambition of Charles and in some sort submitting himself to his patronage. Robert of Tarentum understood this, and ceased making court to Joan, who received his devotion with cool kindness, and attached himself closely to Charles, paying him much the same sort of respect and deference that he himself had affected for André, when the thought was first in his mind of causing his ruin. But the Duke of Durazzo was by no means deceived as to the devoted friendship shown towards him by the heir of the house of Tarentum, and pretending to be deeply touched by the unexpected change of feeling, he all the time kept a strict guard on Robert's actions.

An event outside all human foresight occurred to upset the calculations of the two cousins. One day while they were out together on horseback, as they often were since their pretended reconciliation, Louis of Tarentum, Robert's youngest brother, who had always felt for Joan a chivalrous, innocent love,—a love which a young man of twenty is apt to lock up in his heart as a secret treasure,—Louis, we say, who had held aloof from the infamous family con-

spiracy and had not soiled his hands with André's blood, drawn on by an irrepressible passion, all at once appeared at the gates of Castel Nuovo; and while his brother was wasting precious hours in asking for a promise of marriage, had the bridge raised and gave the soldiers strict orders to admit no one. Then, never troubling himself about Charles's anger or Robert's jealousy, he hurried to the queen's room, and there, says Domenico Gravina, without any preamble, the union was consummated.

On returning from his ride, Robert, astonished that the bridge was not at once lowered for him, at first loudly called upon the soldiers on guard at the fortress, threatening severe punishment for their unpardonable negligence; but as the gates did not open and the soldiers made no sign of fear or regret, he fell into a violent fit of rage, and swore he would hang the wretches like dogs for hindering his return home. But the Empress of Constantinople, terrified at the bloody quarrel beginning between the two brothers, went alone and on foot to her son, and making use of her maternal authority to beg him to master his feelings, there in the presence of the crowd that had come up hastily to witness the strange scene, she related in a low voice all that had passed in his absence.

A roar as of a wounded tiger escaped from Rob-

ert's breast: all but blind with rage, he nearly trampled his mother under the feet of his horse, which seemed to feel his master's anger, and plunging violently, breathed blood from his nostrils. When the prince had poured every possible execration on his brother's head, he turned and galloped away from the accursed castle, flying to the Duke of Durazzo, whom he had only just left, to tell him of this outrage and stir him to revenge. Charles was talking carelessly with his young wife, who was but little used to such tranquil conversation and expansiveness, when the Prince of Tarentum, exhausted, out of breath, bathed in perspiration, came up with his incredible tale. Charles made him say it twice over, so impossible did Louis's audacious enterprise appear to him. Then quickly changing from doubt to fury, he struck his brow with his iron glove, saying that as the queen defied him he would make her tremble even in her castle and in her lover's arms. He threw one withering look on Marie, who interceded tearfully for her sister, and pressing Robert's hand with warmth, vowed that so long as he lived Louis should never be Joan's husband.

That same evening he shut himself up in his study, and wrote letters whose effect soon appeared. A bull, dated June 2, 1346, was addressed to Bertram de Baux, chief-justice of the kingdom of

Sicily and Count of Monte Scaglioso, with orders to make the most strict inquiries concerning André's murderers, whom the pope likewise laid under his anathema, and to punish them with the utmost rigour of the law. But a secret note was appended to the bull which was quite at variance with the designs of Charles: the sovereign pontiff expressly bade the chief-justice not to implicate the queen in the proceedings or the princes of the blood, so as to avoid worse disturbances, reserving, as supreme head of the Church and lord of the kingdom, the right of judging them later on, as his wisdom might dictate.

For this imposing trial Bertram de Baux made great preparations. A platform was erected in the great hall of tribunal, and all the officers of the crown and great state dignitaries, and all the chief barons, had a place behind the enclosure where the magistrates sat. Three days after Clement VI's bull had been published in the capital, the chief-justice was ready for a public examination of two accused persons. The two culprits who had first fallen into the hands of justice were, as one may easily suppose, those whose condition was least exalted, whose lives were least valuable, Tommaso Pace and Nicholas of Melazzo. They were led before the tribunal to be first of all tortured, as the custom was. As they approached the judges,

the notary passing by Charles in the street had time to say in a low voice—

"My lord, the time has come to give my life for you: I will do my duty; I commend my wife and children to you."

Encouraged by a nod from his patron, he walked on firmly and deliberately. The chief-justice, after establishing the identity of the accused, gave them over to the executioner and his men to be tortured in the public square, so that their sufferings might serve as a show and an example to the crowd. But no sooner was Tommaso Pace tied to the rope, when to the great disappointment of all he declared that he would confess everything, and asked accordingly to be taken back before his judges. At these words, the Count of Terlizzi, who was following every movement of the two men with mortal anxiety, thought it was all over now with him and his accomplices; and so, when Tommaso Pace was turning his steps towards the great hall, led by two guards, his hands tied behind his back, and followed by the notary, he contrived to take him into a secluded house, and squeezing his throat with great force, made him thus put his tongue out, whereupon he cut it off with a sharp razor.

The yells of the poor wretch so cruelly mutilated fell on the ears of the Duke of Durazzo: he found his way into the room where the barbarous act had

been committed just as the Count of Terlizzi was coming out, and approached the notary, who had been present at the dreadful spectacle and had not given the least sign of fear or emotion. Master Nicholas, thinking the same fate was in store for him, turned calmly to the duke, saying with a sad smile—

"My lord, the precaution is useless; there is no need for you to cut out my tongue, as the noble count has done to my poor companion. The last scrap of my flesh may be torn off without one word being dragged from my mouth. I have promised, my lord, and you have the life of my wife and the future of my children as guarantee for my word."

"I do not ask for silence," said the duke solemnly; "you can free me from all my enemies at once, and I order you to denounce them at the tribunal."

The notary bowed his head with mournful resignation; then raising it in affright, made one step up to the duke and murmured in a choking voice—

"And the queen?"

"No one would believe you if you ventured to denounce her; but when the Catanese and her son, the Count of Terlizzi and his wife and her most intimate friends, have been accused by you, when they fail to endure the torture, and when they denounce her unanimously——"

"I see, my lord. You do not only want my life; you would have my soul too. Very well; once more I commend to you my children."

With a deep sigh he walked up to the tribunal. The chief-justice asked Tommaso Pace the usual questions, and a shudder of horror passed through the assembly when they saw the poor wretch in desperation opening his mouth, which streamed with blood. But surprise and terror reached their height when Nicholas of Melazzo slowly and firmly gave a list of André's murderers, all except the queen and the princes of the blood, and went on to give all details of the assassination.

Proceedings were at once taken for the arrest of the grand seneschal, Robert of Cabane, and the Counts of Terlizzi and Morcone, who were present and had not ventured to make any movement in self-defence. An hour later, Philippa, her two daughters, and Doña Cancha joined them in prison, after vainly imploring the queen's protection. Charles and Bertrand of Artois, shut up in their fortress of Saint Agatha, bade defiance to justice, and several others, among them the Counts of Meleto and Catanzaro, escaped by flight.

As soon as Master Nicholas said he had nothing further to confess, and that he had spoken the whole truth and nothing but the truth, the chief-justice pronounced sentence amid a profound silence; and

without delay Tommaso Pace and the notary were tied to the tails of two horses, dragged through the chief streets of the town, and hanged in the market-place.

The other prisoners were thrown into a subterranean vault, to be questioned and put to the torture on the following day. In the evening, finding themselves in the same dungeon, they reproached one another, each pretending he had been dragged into the crime by someone else. Then Doña Cancha, whose strange character knew no inconsistencies, even face to face with death and torture, drowned with a great burst of laughter the lamentations of her companions, and joyously exclaimed—

"Look here, friends, why these bitter recriminations—this ill-mannered raving? We have no excuses to make, and we are all equally guilty. I am the youngest of all, and not the ugliest,—by your leave, ladies,—but if I am condemned, at least I will die cheerfully. For I have never denied myself any pleasure I could get in this world; and I can boast that much will be forgiven me, for I have loved much: of that you, gentlemen, know something. You, bad old man," she continued to the Count of Terlizzi, "do you not remember lying by my side in the queen's ante-chamber? Come, no blushes before your noble family; confess, my lord, that I am with child by your Excellency; and you

know how we managed to make up the story of poor Agnes of Durazzo and her pregnancy—God rest her soul! For my part, I never supposed the joke would take such a serious turn all at once. You know all this and much more; spare your lamentations, for, by my word, they are getting very tiresome: let us prepare to die joyously, as we have lived."

With these words she yawned slightly, and, lying down on the straw, fell into a deep sleep, and dreamed as happy dreams as she had ever dreamed in her life.

On the morrow from break of day there was an immense crowd on the sea front. During the night an enormous palisade had been put up to keep the people away far enough for them to see the accused without hearing anything. Charles of Durazzo, at the head of a brilliant cortège of knights and pages, mounted on a magnificent horse, all in black, as a sign of mourning, waited near the enclosure. Ferocious joy shone in his eyes as the accused made their way through the crowd, two by two, their wrists tied with ropes; for the duke every minute expected to hear the queen's name spoken. But the chief-justice, a man of experience, had prevented indiscretion of any kind by fixing a hook in the tongue of each one. The poor creatures were tortured on a ship, so that nobody should hear the ter-

rible confessions their sufferings dragged from them.

But Joan, in spite of the wrongs that most of the conspirators had done her, felt a renewal of pity for the woman she had once respected as a mother, for her childish companions and her friends, and possibly also some remains of love for Robert of Cabane, and sent two messengers to beg Bertram de Baux to show mercy to the culprits. But the chief-justice seized these men and had them tortured; and on their confession that they also were implicated in André's murder, he condemned them to the same punishment as the others. Doña Cancha alone, by reason of her situation, escaped the torture, and her sentence was deferred till the day of her confinement.

As this beautiful girl was returning to prison, with many a smile for all the handsomest cavaliers she could see in the crowd, she gave a sign to Charles of Durazzo as she neared him to come forward, and since her tongue had not been pierced (for the same reason) with an iron instrument, she said some words to him a while in a low voice.

Charles turned fearfully pale, and putting his hand to his sword, cried—

"Wretched woman!"

"You forget, my lord, I am under the protection of the law."

"My mother!—oh, my poor mother!" murmured Charles in a choked voice, and he fell backward.

The next morning the people were beforehand with the executioner, loudly demanding their prey. All the national troops and mercenaries that the judicial authorities could command were echelonned in the streets, opposing a sort of dam to the torrent of the raging crowd. The sudden insatiable cruelty that too often degrades human nature had awaked in the populace: all heads were turned with hatred and frenzy; all imaginations inflamed with the passion for revenge; groups of men and women, roaring like wild beasts, threatened to knock down the walls of the prison, if the condemned were not handed over to them to take to the place of punishment: a great murmur arose, continuous, ever the same, like the growling of thunder: the queen's heart was petrified with terror.

But, in spite of the desire of Bertram de Baux to satisfy the popular wish, the preparations for the solemn execution were not completed till midday, when the sun's rays fell scorchingly upon the town. There went up a mighty cry from ten thousand palpitating breasts when a report first ran through the crowd that the prisoners were about to appear. There was a moment of silence, and the prison doors rolled slowly back on their hinges with a rusty, grating noise. A triple row of horsemen, with lowered

visor and lance in rest, started the procession, and amid yells and curses the condemned prisoners came out one by one, each tied upon a cart, gagged and naked to the waist, in charge of two executioners, whose orders were to torture them the whole length of their way. On the first cart was the former laundress of Catana, afterwards wife of the grand seneschal and governess to the queen, Philippa of Cabane: the two executioners at right and left of her scourged her with such fury that the blood spurting up from the wounds left a long track in all the streets passed by the cortège.

Immediately following their mother on separate carts came the Countesses of Terlizzi and Morcone, the elder no more than eighteen years of age. The two sisters were so marvellously beautiful that in the crowd a murmur of surprise was heard, and greedy eyes were fixed upon their naked trembling shoulders. But the men charged to torture them gazed with ferocious smiles upon their forms of seductive beauty, and, armed with sharp knives, cut off pieces of their flesh with a deliberate enjoyment and threw them out to the crowd, who eagerly struggled to get them, signing to the executioners to show which part of the victims' bodies they preferred.

Robert of Cabane, the grand seneschal, the Counts of Terlizzi and Morcone, Raymond Pace, brother

of the old valet who had been executed the day before, and many more, were dragged on similar carts, and both scourged with ropes and slashed with knives; their flesh was torn out with red-hot pincers, and flung upon brazen chafing-dishes. No cry of pain was heard from the grand seneschal, he never stirred once in his frightful agony; yet the torturers put such fury into their work that the poor wretch was dead before the goal was reached.

In the centre of the square of Saint Eligius an immense stake was set up: there the prisoners were taken, and what was left of their mutilated bodies was thrown into the flames. The Count of Terlizzi and the grand seneschal's widow were still alive, and two tears of blood ran down the cheeks of the miserable mother as she saw her son's corpse and the palpitating remains of her two daughters cast upon the fire—they by their stifled cries showed that they had not ceased to suffer. But suddenly a fearful noise overpowered the groans of the victims; the enclosure was broken and overturned by the mob. Like madmen, they rushed at the burning pile, armed with sabres, axes, and knives, and snatching the bodies dead or alive from the flames, tore them to pieces, carrying off the bones to make whistles or handles for their daggers as a souvenir of this horrible day.

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## CHAPTER VI

THE spectacle of this frightful punishment did not satisfy the revenge of Charles of Durazzo. Seconded by the chief-justice, he daily brought about fresh executions, till André's death came to be no more than a pretext for the legal murder of all who opposed his projects. But Louis of Tarentum, who had won Joan's heart, and was eagerly trying to get the necessary dispensation for legalising the marriage, from this time forward took as a personal insult every act of the high court of justice which was performed against his will and against the queen's prerogative: he armed all his adherents, increasing their number by all the adventurers he could get together, and so put on foot a strong enough force to support his own party and resist his cousin. Naples was thus split up into hostile camps, ready to come to blows on the smallest pretext, whose daily skirmishes, moreover, were always followed by some scene of pillage or death.

But Louis had need of money both to pay his mercenaries and to hold his own against the Duke

of Durazzo and his own brother Robert, and one day he discovered that the queen's coffers were empty. Joan was wretched and desperate, and her lover, though generous and brave and anxious to reassure her so far as he could, did not very clearly see how to extricate himself from such a difficult situation. But his mother Catherine, whose ambition was satisfied in seeing one of her sons, no matter which, attain to the throne of Naples, came unexpectedly to their aid, promising solemnly that it would only take her a few days to be able to lay at her niece's feet a treasure richer than anything she had ever dreamed of, queen as she was.

The empress then took half her son's troops, made for Saint Agatha, and besieged the fortress where Charles and Bertrand of Artois had taken refuge when they fled from justice. The old count, astonished at the sight of this woman, who had been the very soul of the conspiracy, and not in the least understanding her arrival as an enemy, sent out to ask the intention of this display of military force. To which Catherine replied in words which we translate literally:—

"My friends, tell Charles, our faithful friend, that we desire to speak with him privately and alone concerning a matter equally interesting to us both, and he is not to be alarmed at our arriving in the guise of an enemy, for this we have done

designedly, as we shall explain in the course of our interview. We know he is confined to bed by the gout, and therefore feel no surprise at his not coming out to meet us. Have the goodness to salute him on our part and reassure him, telling him that we desire to come in, if such is his good pleasure, with our intimate counsellor, Nicholas Acciajuoli, and ten soldiers only, to speak with him concerning an important matter that cannot be entrusted to go-betweens."

Entirely reassured by these frank, friendly explanations, Charles of Artois sent out his son Bertrand to the empress to receive her with the respect due to her rank and high position at the court of Naples. Catherine went promptly to the castle with many signs of joy, and inquiring after the count's health and expressing her affection, as soon as they were alone, she mysteriously lowered her voice and explained that the object of her visit was to consult a man of tried experience on the affairs of Naples, and to beg his active co-operation in the queen's favour. As, however, she was not pressed for time, she could wait at Saint Agatha for the count's recovery to hear his views and tell him of the march of events since he left the court. She succeeded so well in gaining the old man's confidence and banishing his suspicions, that he begged her to honour them with her presence as long as she was able, and

little by little received all her men within the walls. This was what Catherine was waiting for: on the very day when her army was installed at Saint Agatha, she suddenly entered the count's room, followed by four soldiers, and seizing the old man by the throat, exclaimed wrathfully—

"Miserable traitor, you will not escape from our hands before you have received the punishment you deserve. In the meanwhile, show me where your treasure is hidden, if you would not have me throw your body out to feed the crows that are swooping around these dungeons."

The count, half choking, the dagger at his breast, did not even attempt to call for help; he fell on his knees, begging the empress to save at least the life of his son, who was not yet well from the terrible attack of melancholia that had shaken his reason ever since the catastrophe. Then he painfully dragged himself to the place where he had hidden his treasure, and pointing with his finger, cried—

"Take all; take my life; but spare my son."

Catherine could not contain herself for joy when she saw spread out at her feet exquisite and incredibly valuable cups, caskets of pearls, diamonds and rubies of marvellous value, coffers full of gold ingots, and all the wonders of Asia that surpass the wildest imagination. But when the old man, trem-

bling, begged for the liberty of his son as the price of his fortune and his own life, the empress resumed her cold, pitiless manner, and harshly replied—

"I have already given orders for your son to be brought here; but prepare for an eternal farewell, for he is to be taken to the fortress of Melfi, and you in all probability will end your days beneath the castle of Saint Agatha."

The grief of the poor count at this violent separation was so great, that a few days later he was found dead in his dungeon, his lips covered with a bloody froth, his hands gnawed in despair. Bertrand did not long survive him. He actually lost his reason when he heard of his father's death, and hanged himself on the prison grating. Thus did the murderers of André destroy one another, like venomous animals shut up in the same cage.

Catherine of Tarentum, carrying off the treasure she had so gained, arrived at the court of Naples, proud of her triumph and contemplating vast schemes. But new troubles had come about in her absence. Charles of Durazzo, for the last time desiring the queen to give him the duchy of Calabria, a title which had always belonged to the heir presumptive, and angered by her refusal, had written to Louis of Hungary, inviting him to take possession of the kingdom, and promising to help in the enterprise with all his own forces, and to give up

the principal authors of his brother's death, who till now had escaped justice.

The King of Hungary eagerly accepted these offers, and got ready an army to avenge André's death and proceed to the conquest of Naples. The tears of his mother Elizabeth and the advice of Friar Robert, the old minister, who had fled to Buda, confirmed him in his projects of vengeance. He had already lodged a bitter complaint at the court of Avignon that, while the inferior assassins had been punished, she who was above all others guilty had been shamefully let off scot free, and though still stained with her husband's blood, continued to live a life of debauchery and adultery. The pope replied soothingly that, so far as it depended upon him, he would not be found slow to give satisfaction to a lawful grievance; but the accusation ought to be properly formulated and supported by proof; that no doubt Joan's conduct during and after her husband's death was blamable; but His Majesty must consider that the Church of Rome, which before all things seeks truth and justice, always proceeds with the utmost circumspection, and in so grave a matter more especially must not judge by appearances only.

Joan, frightened by the preparations for war, sent ambassadors to the Florentine Republic, to assert her innocence of the crime imputed to her by

public opinion, and did not hesitate to send excuses even to the Hungarian court; but André's brother replied in a letter laconic and threatening:—

"Your former disorderly life, the arrogation to yourself of exclusive power, your neglect to punish your husband's murderers, your marriage to another husband, moreover your own excuses, are all sufficient proofs that you were an accomplice in the murder."

Catherine would not be put out of heart by the King of Hungary's threats, and looking at the position of the queen and her son with a coolness that was never deceived, she was convinced that there was no other means of safety except a reconciliation with Charles, their mortal foe, which could only be brought about by giving him all he wanted. It was one of two things: either he would help them to repulse the King of Hungary, and later on they would pay the cost when the dangers were less pressing, or he would be beaten himself, and thus they would at least have the pleasure of drawing him down with them in their own destruction.

The agreement was made in the gardens of Castel Nuovo, whither Charles had repaired on the invitation of the queen and her aunt. To her cousin of Durazzo Joan accorded the title so much desired of Duke of Calabria, and Charles, feeling that he was hereby made heir to the kingdom, marched at once

on Aquila, which town already was flying the Hungarian colours. The wretched man did not foresee that he was going straight to his destruction.

When the Empress of Constantinople saw this man, whom she hated above all others, depart in joy, she looked contemptuously upon him, divining by a woman's instinct that mischief would befall him; then, having no further mischief to do, no further treachery on earth, no further revenge to satisfy, she all at once succumbed to some unknown malady, and died suddenly, without uttering a cry or exciting a single regret.

But the King of Hungary, who had crossed Italy with a formidable army, now entered the kingdom from the side of Aquila: on his way he had everywhere received marks of interest and sympathy; and Alberto and Mertino della Scala, lords of Verona, had given him three hundred horse to prove that all their goodwill was with him in his enterprise. The news of the arrival of the Hungarians threw the court into a state of confusion impossible to describe. They had hoped that the king would be stopped by the pope's legate, who had come to Foligno to forbid him, in the name of the Holy Father, and on pain of excommunication to proceed any further without his consent; but Louis of Hungary replied to the pope's legate that, once master of Naples, he should consider himself a feudatory

of the Church, but till then he had no obligations except to God and his own conscience. Thus the avenging army fell like a thunderbolt upon the heart of the kingdom, before there was any thought of taking serious measures for defence. There was only one plan possible: the queen assembled the barons who were most strongly attached to her, made them swear homage and fidelity to Louis of Tarentum, whom she presented to them as her husband, and then leaving with many tears her most faithful subjects, she embarked secretly, in the middle of the night, on a ship of Provence, and made for Marseilles. Louis of Tarentum, following the prompting of his adventure-loving character, left Naples at the head of three thousand horse and a considerable number of foot, and took up his post on the banks of the Voltorno, there to contest the enemy's passage; but the King of Hungary foresaw the stratagem, and while his adversary was waiting for him at Capua, he arrived at Beneventum by the mountains of Alife and Morcone, and on the same day received Neapolitan envoys: they in a magnificent display of eloquence congratulated him on his entrance, offered the keys of the town, and swore obedience to him as being the legitimate successor of Charles of Anjou. The news of the surrender of Naples soon reached the queen's camp, and all the princes of the blood and the generals left Louis

of Tarentum and took refuge in the capital. Resistance was impossible. Louis, accompanied by his counsellor, Nicholas Acciajuoli, went to Naples on the same evening on which his relatives quitted the town to get away from the enemy. Every hope of safety was vanishing as the hours passed by; his brothers and cousins begged him to go at once, so as not to draw down upon the town the king's vengeance, but unluckily there was no ship in the harbour that was ready to set sail. The terror of the princes was at its height; but Louis, trusting in his luck, started with the brave Acciajuoli in an unseaworthy boat, and ordering four sailors to row with all their might, in a few minutes disappeared, leaving his family in a great state of anxiety till they learned that he had reached Pisa, whither he had gone to join the queen in Provence. Charles of Durazzo and Robert of Tarentum, who were the eldest respectively of the two branches of the royal family, after hastily consulting, decided to soften the Hungarian monarch's wrath by a complete submission. Leaving their young brothers at Naples, they accordingly set off for Aversa, where the king was. Louis received them with every mark of friendship, and asked with much interest why their brothers were not with them. The princes replied that their young brothers had stayed at Naples to prepare a worthy reception for His Majesty. Louis

thanked them for their kind intentions, but begged them to invite the young princes now, saying that it would be infinitely more pleasant to enter Naples with all his family, and that he was most anxious to see his cousins. Charles and Robert, to please the king, sent equerries to bid their brothers come to Aversa; but Louis of Durazzo, the eldest of the boys, with many tears begged the others not to obey, and sent a message that he was prevented by a violent headache from leaving Naples. So puerile an excuse could not fail to annoy Charles, and the same day he compelled the unfortunate boys to appear before the king, sending a formal order which admitted of no delay. Louis of Hungary embraced them warmly one after the other, asked them several questions in an affectionate way, kept them to supper, and only let them go quite late at night.

When the Duke of Durazzo reached his room, Lello of Aquila and the Count of Fondi slipped mysteriously to the side of his bed, and making sure that no one could hear, told him that the king in a council held that morning had decided to kill him and to imprison the other princes. Charles heard them out, but incredulously: suspecting treachery, he dryly replied that he had too much confidence in his cousin's loyalty to believe such a black calumny. Lello insisted, begging him in the name of his dearest friends to listen; but the

duke was impatient, and harshly ordered him to depart.

The next day there was the same kindness on the king's part, the same affection shown to the children, the same invitation to supper. The banquet was magnificent; the room was brilliantly lighted, and the reflections were dazzling: vessels of gold shone on the table, the intoxicating perfume of flowers filled the air; wine foamed in the goblets and flowed from the flagons in ruby streams: conversation, excited and discursive, was heard on every side: all faces beamed with joy.

Charles of Durazzo sat opposite the king, at a separate table among his brothers. Little by little his look grew fixed, his brow pensive. He was fancying that André might have supped in this very hall on the eve of his tragic end, and he thought how all concerned in that death had either died in torment or were now languishing in prison; the queen, an exile and a fugitive, was begging pity from strangers: he alone was free. The thought made him tremble; but admiring his own cleverness in pursuing his infernal schemes, and putting away his sad looks, he smiled again with an expression of indefinable pride. The madman at this moment was scoffing at the justice of God. But Lello of Aquila, who was waiting at the table, bent down, whispering gloomily—

"Unhappy duke, why did you refuse to believe me? Fly, while there is yet time."

Charles, angered by the man's obstinacy, threatened that if he were such a fool as to say any more, he would repeat every word aloud.

"I have done my duty," murmured Lello, bowing his head; "now it must happen as God wills."

As he left off speaking, the king rose, and as the duke went up to take his leave, his face suddenly changed, and he cried in an awful voice—

"Traitor! At length you are in my hands, and you shall die as you deserve; but before you are handed over to the executioner, confess with your own lips your deeds of treachery towards our royal majesty: so shall we need no other witness to condemn you to a punishment proportioned to your crimes. Between our two selves, Duke of Durazzo —tell me first why, by your infamous manœuvring, you aided your uncle, the Cardinal of Perigord, to hinder the coronation of my brother, and so led him on, since he had no royal prerogative of his own, to his miserable end? Oh, make no attempt to deny it. Here is the letter sealed with your seal: in secret you wrote it, but it accuses you in public. Then why, after bringing us hither to avenge our brother's death,—of which you beyond all doubt were the cause,—why did you suddenly turn to the

queen's party and march against our town of Aquila, daring to raise an army against our faithful subjects? You hoped, traitor, to make use of us as a footstool to mount the throne withal, as soon as you were free from every other rival. Then you would but have awaited our departure to kill the viceroy we should have left in our place, and so seize the kingdom. But this time your foresight has been at fault. There is yet another crime worse than all the rest, a crime of high treason, which I shall remorselessly punish. You carried off the bride that our ancestor King Robert designed for me, as you knew, by his will. Answer, wretch: what excuse can you make for the rape of the Princess Marie?"

Anger had so changed Louis's voice that the last words sounded like the roar of a wild beast: his eyes glittered with a feverish light, his lips were pale and trembling. Charles and his brothers fell upon their knees, frozen by mortal terror, and the unhappy duke twice tried to speak, but his teeth were chattering so violently that he could not articulate a single word. At last, casting his eyes about him and seeing his poor brothers, innocent and ruined by his fault, he regained some sort of courage, and said—

"My lord, you look upon me with a terrible countenance that makes me tremble. But on my

knees I entreat you, have mercy on me if I have done wrong, for God is my witness that I did not call you to this kingdom with any criminal intention: I have always desired, and still desire, your supremacy in all the sincerity of my soul. Some treacherous counsellors, I am certain, have contrived to draw down your hatred upon me. If it is true, as you say, that I went with an armed force to Aquila, I was compelled by Queen Joan, and I could not do otherwise; but as soon as I heard of your arrival at Fermo I took my troops away again. I hope for the love of Christ I may obtain your mercy and pardon, by reason of my former services and constant loyalty. But as I see you are now angry with me I say no more waiting for your fury to pass over. Once again, my lord, have pity upon us, since we are in the hands of your Majesty."

The king turned away his head, and retired slowly, confiding the prisoners to the care of Stephen Vayvoda and the Count of Zornic, who guarded them during the night in a room adjoining the king's chamber. The next day Louis held another meeting of his council, and ordered that Charles should have his throat cut on the very spot where poor André had been hanged. He then sent the other princes of the blood, loaded with chains, to Hungary, where they were long kept prisoners. Charles, quite thunderstruck by such an unexpected

blow, overwhelmed by the thought of his past crimes, trembled like a coward face to face with death, and seemed completely crushed. Bowed upon his knees, his face half hidden in his hands, from time to time convulsive sobs escaped him, as he tried to fix the thoughts that chased each other through his mind like the shapes of a monstrous dream. Night was in his soul, but every now and then light flashed across the darkness, and over the gloomy background of his despair passed gilded figures fleeing from him with smiles of mockery. In his ears buzzed voices from the other world; he saw a long procession of ghosts, like the conspirators whom Nicholas of Melazzo had pointed out in the vaults of Castel Nuovo. But these phantoms each held his head in his hand, and shaking it by the hair, bespattered him with drops of blood. Some brandished whips, some knives: each threatened Charles with his instrument of torture. Pursued by the nocturnal train, the hapless man opened his mouth for one mighty cry, but his breath was gone, and it died upon his lips. Then he beheld his mother stretching out her arms from afar, and he fancied that if he could but reach her he would be safe. But at each step the path grew more and more narrow, pieces of his flesh were torn off by the approaching walls; at last, breathless, naked and bleeding, he reached his goal; but his mother glided

farther away, and it was all to begin over again. The phantoms pursued him, grinning and screaming in his ears—

"Cursed be he who slayeth his mother!"

Charles was roused from these horrors by the cries of his brothers, who had come to embrace him for the last time before embarking. The duke in a low voice asked their pardon, and then fell back into his state of despair. The children were dragged away, begging to be allowed to share their brother's fate, and crying for death as an alleviation of their woes. At length they were separated, but the sound of their lamentation sounded long in the heart of the condemned man. After a few moments, two soldiers and two equerries came to tell the duke that his hour had come.

Charles followed them, unresisting, to the fatal balcony where André had been hanged. He was there asked if he desired to confess, and when he said yes, they brought a monk from the same convent where the terrible scene had been enacted: he listened to the confession of all his sins, and granted him absolution. The duke at once rose and walked to the place where André had been thrown down for the cord to be put round his neck, and there, kneeling again, he asked his executioners—

"Friends, in pity tell me, is there any hope for my life?"

And when they answered no, Charles exclaimed—

"Then carry out your instructions."

At these words, one of the equerries plunged his sword into his breast, and the other cut his head off with a knife, and his corpse was thrown over the balcony into the garden where André's body had lain for three days unburied.

## CHAPTER VII

THE King of Hungary, his black flag ever borne before him, started for Naples, refusing all offered honours, and rejecting the canopy beneath which he was to make his entry, not even stopping to give audience to the chief citizens or to receive the acclamations of the crowd. Armed at all points, he made for Castel Nuovo, leaving behind him dismay and fear. His first act on entering the city was to order Doña Cancha to be burnt, her punishment having been deferred by reason of her pregnancy. Like the others, she was drawn on a cart to the square of St. Eligius, and there consigned to the flames. The young creature, whose suffering had not impaired her beauty, was dressed as for a festival, and laughing like a mad thing up to the last moment, mocked at her executioners and threw kisses to the crowd.

A few days later, Godfrey of Marsana, Count of Squillace and grand admiral of the kingdom, was arrested by the king's orders. His life was promised him on condition of his delivering up Conrad of Catanzaro, one of his relatives, accused of con-

spiring against André. The grand admiral committed this act of shameless treachery, and did not shrink from sending his own son to persuade Conrad to come to the town. The poor wretch was given over to the king, and tortured alive on a wheel made with sharp knives. The sight of these barbarities, far from calming the king's rage, seemed to inflame it the more. Every day there were new accusations and new sentences. The prisons were crowded: Louis's punishments were redoubled in severity. A fear arose that the town, and indeed the whole kingdom, were to be treated as having taken part in André's death. Murmurs arose against this barbarous rule, and all men's thoughts turned towards their fugitive queen. The Neapolitan barons had taken the oath of fidelity with no willing hearts; and when it came to the turn of the Counts of San Severino, they feared a trick of some kind, and refused to appear all together before the Hungarian, but took refuge in the town of Salerno, and sent Archbishop Roger, their brother, to make sure of the king's intentions beforehand. Louis received him magnificently, and appointed him privy councillor and grand protonotary. Then, and not till then, did Robert of San Severino and Roger, Count of Chiaramonte, venture into the king's presence; after doing homage, they retired to their homes. The other barons fol-

lowed their example of caution, and hiding their discontent under a show of respect, awaited a favourable moment for shaking off the foreign yoke. But the queen had encountered no obstacle in her flight, and arrived at Nice five days later. Her passage through Provence was like a triumph. Her beauty, youth, and misfortunes, even certain mysterious reports as to her adventures, all contributed to arouse the interest of the Provençal people. Games and fêtes were improvised to soften the hardship of exile for the proscribed princess; but amid the outbursts of joy from every town, castle, and city, Joan, always sad, lived ever in her silent grief and glowing memories.

At the gates of Aix she found the clergy, the nobility, and the chief magistrates, who received her respectfully but with no signs of enthusiasm. As the queen advanced, her astonishment increased as she saw the coldness of the people and the solemn, constrained air of the great men who escorted her. Many anxious thoughts alarmed her, and she even went so far as to fear some intrigue of the King of Hungary. Scarcely had her cortège arrived at Castle Arnaud, when the nobles, dividing into two ranks, let the queen pass with her counsellor Spinelli and two women; then closing up, they cut her off from the rest of her suite. After this, each in turn took up his station as guardian of the fortress.

There was no room for doubt: the queen was a prisoner; but the cause of the manœuvre it was impossible to guess. She asked the high dignitaries, and they, protesting respectful devotion, refused to explain till they had news from Avignon. Meanwhile all honours that a queen could receive were lavished on Joan; but she was kept in sight and forbidden to go out. This new trouble increased her depression: she did not know what had happened to Louis of Tarentum, and her imagination, always apt at creating disasters, instantly suggested that she would soon be weeping for his loss.

But Louis, always with his faithful Acciajuoli, had after many fatiguing adventures been shipwrecked at the port of Pisa; thence he had taken route for Florence, to beg men and money; but the Florentines decided to keep an absolute neutrality, and refused to receive him. The prince, losing his last hope, was pondering gloomy plans, when Nicholas Acciajuoli thus resolutely addressed him:—

"My lord, it is not given to mankind to enjoy prosperity for ever: there are misfortunes beyond all human foresight. You were once rich and powerful, and you are now a fugitive in disguise, begging the help of others. You must reserve your strength for better days. I still have a considerable

fortune, and also have relations and friends whose wealth is at my disposal: let us try to make our way to the queen, and at once decide what we can do. I myself shall always defend you and obey you as my lord and master."

The prince received these generous offers with the utmost gratitude, and told his counsellor that he placed his person in his hands and all that remained of his future. Acciajuoli, not content with serving his master as a devoted servant, persuaded his brother Angelo, Archbishop of Florence, who was in great favour at Clement VI's court, to join with them in persuading the pope to interest himself in the cause of Louis of Tarentum. So, without further delay, the prince, his counsellor, and the good prelate made their way to the port of Marseilles, but learning that the queen was a prisoner at Aix, they embarked at Acque-Morte, and went straight to Avignon. It soon appeared that the pope had a real affection and esteem for the character of the Archbishop of Florence, for Louis was received with paternal kindness at the court of Avignon, which was far more than he had expected. When he kneeled before the sovereign pontiff, His Holiness bent affectionately towards him and helped him to rise, saluting him by the title of king.

Two days later, another prelate, the Archbishop of Aix, came into the queen's presence,

and solemnly bowing before her, spoke as follows:—

"Most gracious and dearly beloved sovereign, permit the most humble and devoted of your servants to ask pardon, in the name of your subjects, for the painful but necessary measure they have thought fit to take concerning your Majesty. When you arrived on our coast, your loyal town of Aix had learned from a trustworthy source that the King of France was proposing to give our country to one of his own sons, making good this loss to you by the cession of another domain, also that the Duke of Normandy had come to Avignon to request this exchange in person. We were quite decided, madam, and had made a vow to God that we would give up everything rather than suffer the hateful tyranny of the French. But before spilling blood we thought it best to secure your august person as a sacred hostage, a sacred ark which no man dared touch but was smitten to the ground, which indeed must keep away from our walls the scourge of war. We have now read the formal annulment of this hateful plan, in a brief sent by the sovereign pontiff from Avignon; and in this brief he himself guarantees your good faith.

"We give you your full and entire liberty, and henceforth we shall only endeavour to keep you among us by prayers and protestations. Go then,

madam, if that is your pleasure, but before you leave these lands, which will be plunged into mourning by your withdrawal, leave with us some hope that you forgive the apparent violence to which we have subjected you, only in the fear that we might lose you; and remember that on the day when you cease to be our queen you sign the death-warrant of all your subjects."

Joan reassured the archbishop and the deputation from her good town of Aix with a melancholy smile, and promised that she would always cherish the memory of their affection. For this time she could not be deceived as to the real sentiments of the nobles and people; and a fidelity so uncommon, revealed with sincere tears, touched her heart and made her reflect bitterly upon her past. But a league's distance from Avignon a magnificent triumphal reception awaited her. Louis of Tarentum and all the cardinals present at the court had come out to meet her. Pages in dazzling dress carried above Joan's head a canopy of scarlet velvet, ornamented with fleur-de-lys in gold and plumes. Handsome youths and lovely girls, their heads crowned with flowers, went before her singing her praise. The streets were bordered with a living hedge of people, the houses were decked out, the bells rang a triple peal, as at the great Church festivals. Clement VI first received the queen at the castle of

Avignon with all the pomp he knew so well how to employ on solemn occasions, then she was lodged in the palace of Cardinal Napoleon of the Orsini, who on his return from the Conclave at Perugia had built this regal dwelling at Villeneuve, inhabited later by the popes.

No words could give an idea of the strangely disturbed condition of Avignon at this period. Since Clement v had transported the seat of the papacy to Provence, there had sprung up, in this rival to Rome, squares, churches, cardinals' palaces, of unparalleled splendour. All the business of nations and kings was transacted at the castle of Avignon. Ambassadors from every court, merchants of every nation, adventurers of all kinds, Italians, Spaniards, Hungarians, Arabs, Jews, soldiers, Bohemians, jesters, poets, monks, courtesans, swarmed and clustered here, and hustled one another in the streets. There was confusion of tongues, customs, and costumes, an inextricable mixture of splendour and rags, riches and misery, debasement and grandeur. The austere poets of the Middle Ages stigmatised the accursed city in their writings under the name of the New Babylon.

There is one curious monument of Joan's sojourn at Avignon and the exercise of her authority as sovereign. She was indignant at the effrontery of the women of the town, who elbowed everybody

shamelessly in the streets, and published a notable edict, the first of its kind, which has since served as a model in like cases, to compel all unfortunate women who trafficked in their honour to live shut up together in a house, that was bound to be open every day in the year except the last three days of Holy Week, the entrance to be barred to Jews at all times. An abbess, chosen once a year, had the supreme control over this strange convent. Rules were established for the maintenance of order, and severe penalties inflicted for any infringement of discipline. The lawyers of the period gained a great reputation by this salutary institution; the fair ladies of Avignon were eager in their defence of the queen in spite of the calumnious reports that strove to tarnish her reputation: with one voice the wisdom of André's widow was extolled. The concert of praises was disturbed, however, by murmurs from the recluses themselves, who, in their own brutal language, declared that Joan of Naples was impeding their commerce so as to get a monopoly for herself.

Meanwhile Marie of Durazzo had joined her sister. After her husband's death she had found means to take refuge in the convent of Santa Croce with her two little daughters; and while Louis of Hungary was busy burning his victims, the unhappy Marie had contrived to make her escape in the frock

of an old monk, and as by a miracle to get on board a ship that was setting sail for Provence. She related to her sister the frightful details of the king's cruelty. And soon a new proof of his implacable hatred confirmed the tales of the poor princess: Louis's ambassadors appeared at the court of Avignon to demand formally the queen's condemnation.

It was a great day when Joan of Naples pleaded her own cause before the pope, in the presence of all the cardinals then at Avignon, all the ambassadors of foreign powers, and all the eminent persons come from every quarter of Europe to be present at this trial, unique in the annals of history. We must imagine a vast enclosure, in whose midst upon a raised throne, as president of the august tribunal, sat God's vicar on earth, absolute and supreme judge, emblem of temporal and spiritual power, of authority human and divine. To right and left of the sovereign pontiff, the cardinals in their red robes sat in chairs set round in a circle, and behind these princes of the Sacred College stretched rows of bishops extending to the end of the hall, with vicars, canons, deacons, archdeacons, and the whole immense hierarchy of the Church. Facing the pontifical throne was a platform reserved for the Queen of Naples and her suite. At the pope's feet stood the ambassadors from the King

of Hungary, who played the part of accusers without speaking a word, the circumstances of the crime and all the proofs having been discussed beforehand by a committee appointed for the purpose. The rest of the hall was filled by a brilliant crowd of high dignitaries, illustrious captains, and noble envoys, all vying with one another in proud display. Everyone ceased to breathe, all eyes were fixed on the daïs whence Joan was to speak her own defence. A movement of uneasy curiosity made this compact mass of humanity surge towards the centre, the cardinals above raised like proud peacocks over a golden harvest-field shaken in the breeze.

The queen appeared, hand in hand with her uncle, the old Cardinal of Perigord, and her aunt, the Countess Agnes. Her gait was so modest and proud, her countenance so melancholy and pure, her looks so open and confident, that even before she spoke every heart was hers. Joan was now twenty years of age; her magnificent beauty was fully developed, but an extreme pallor concealed the brilliance of her transparent satin skin, and her hollow cheek told the tale of expiation and suffering. Among the spectators who looked on most eagerly there was a certain young man with strongly marked features, glowing eyes, and brown hair, whom we shall meet again later on in our narra-

tive; but we will not divert our readers' attention, but only tell them that his name was James of Aragon, that he was Prince of Majorca, and would have been ready to shed every drop of his blood only to check one single tear that hung on Joan's eyelids. The queen spoke in an agitated, trembling voice, stopping from time to time to dry her moist and shining eyes, or to breathe one of those deep sighs that go straight to the heart. She told the tale of her husband's death painfully and vividly, painted truthfully the mad terror that had seized upon her and struck her down at that frightful time, raised her hands to her brow with the gesture of despair, as though she would wrest the madness from her brain—and a shudder of pity and awe passed through the assembled crowd. It is a fact that at this moment, if her words were false, her anguish was both sincere and terrible. An angel soiled by crime, she lied like Satan himself, but like him too she suffered all the agony of remorse and pride. Thus, when at the end of her speech she burst into tears and implored help and protection against the usurper of her kingdom, a cry of general assent drowned her closing words, several hands flew to their sword-hilts, and the Hungarian ambassadors retired covered with shame and confusion.

That same evening the sentence, to the great joy

of all, was proclaimed, that Joan was innocent and acquitted of all concern in the assassination of her husband. But as her conduct after the event and the indifference she had shown about pursuing the authors of the crime admitted of no valid excuse, the pope declared that there were plain traces of magic, and that the wrong-doing attributed to Joan was the result of some baneful charm cast upon her, which she could by no possible means resist. At the same time, His Holiness confirmed her marriage with Louis of Tarentum, and bestowed on him the order of the Rose of Gold and the title of King of Sicily and Jerusalem. Joan, it is true, had on the eve of her acquittal sold the town of Avignon to the pope for the sum of 80,000 florins.

While the queen was pleading her cause at the court of Clement VI, a dreadful epidemic, called the Black Plague—the same that Boccaccio has described so wonderfully—was ravaging the kingdom of Naples, and indeed the whole of Italy. According to the calculation of Matteo Villani, Florence lost three-fifths of her population, Bologna two-thirds, and nearly all Europe was reduced in some such frightful proportion. The Neapolitans were already weary of the cruelties and greed of the Hungarians, they were only awaiting some opportunity to revolt against the stranger's oppression, and to recall their lawful sovereign, whom,

for all her ill deeds, they had never ceased to love. The attraction of youth and beauty was deeply felt by this pleasure-loving people. Scarcely had the pestilence thrown confusion into the army and town, when loud cursing arose against the tyrant and his executioners. Louis of Hungary, suddenly threatened by the wrath of Heaven and the people's vengeance, was terrified both by the plague and by the riots, and disappeared in the middle of the night. Leaving the government of Naples in the hands of Conrad Lupo, one of his captains, he embarked hastily at Berletta, and left the kingdom in very much the same way as Louis of Tarentum, fleeing from him, had left it a few months before.

This news arrived at Avignon just when the pope was about to send the queen his bull of absolution. It was at once decided to take away the kingdom from Louis's viceroy. Nicholas Acciajuoli left for Naples with the marvellous bull that was to prove to all men the innocence of the queen, to banish all scruples and stir up a new enthusiasm. The counsellor first went to the castle of Melzi, commanded by his son Lorenzo: this was the only fortress that had always held out. The father and son embraced with the honourable pride that near relatives may justly feel when they meet after they have united in the performance of a heroic duty. From the governor of Melzi Louis of Tarentum's

counsellor learned that all men were wearied of the arrogance and vexatious conduct of the queen's enemies, and that a conspiracy was in train, started in the University of Naples, but with vast ramifications all over the kingdom, and moreover that there was dissension in the enemy's army. The indefatigable counsellor went from Apulia to Naples, traversing towns and villages, collecting men everywhere, proclaiming loudly the acquittal of the queen and her marriage with Louis of Tarentum, also that the pope was offering indulgences to such as would receive with joy their lawful sovereigns. Then seeing that the people shouted as he went by, "Long live Joan! Death to the Hungarians!" he returned and told his sovereigns in what frame of mind he had left their subjects.

Joan borrowed money wherever she could, armed galleys, and left Marseilles with her husband, her sister, and two faithful advisers, Acciajuoli and Spinelli, on the 10th of September 1348. The king and queen not being able to enter at the harbour, which was in the enemy's power, disembarked at Santa Maria del Carmine, near the river Sebeto, amid the frenzied applause of an immense crowd, and accompanied by all the Neapolitan nobles. They made their way to the palace of Messire Ajutorio, near Porta Capuana, the Hungarians having fortified themselves in all the castles; but Accia-

juoli, at the head of the queen's partisans, blockaded the fortresses so ably that half of the enemy were obliged to surrender, and the other half took to flight and were scattered about the interior of the kingdom. We shall now follow Louis of Tarentum in his arduous adventures in Apulia, the Calabrias, and the Abruzzi, where he recovered one by one the fortresses that the Hungarians had taken. By dint of unexampled valour and patience, he at last mastered nearly all the more considerable places, when suddenly everything changed, and fortune turned her back upon him for the second time. A German captain called Warner, who had deserted the Hungarian army to sell himself to the queen, had again played the traitor and sold himself once more, allowed himself to be surprised at Corneto by Conrad Lupo, the King of Hungary's vicar-general, and openly joined him, taking along with him a great party of the adventurers who fought under his orders. This unexpected defection forced Louis of Tarentum to retire to Naples. The King of Hungary soon learning that the troops had rallied round his banner, and only awaited his return to march upon the capital, disembarked with a strong reinforcement of cavalry at the port of Manfredonia, and taking Trani, Canosa, and Salerno, went forward to lay siege to Aversa.

The news fell like a thunder-clap on Joan and her

husband. The Hungarian army consisted of 10,000 horse and more than 7000 infantry, and Aversa had only 500 soldiers under Giacomo Pignatelli. In spite of the immense disproportion of the numbers, the Neapolitan general vigorously repelled the attack; and the King of Hungary, fighting in the front, was wounded in his foot by an arrow. Then Louis, seeing that it would be difficult to take the place by storm, determined to starve them out. For three months the besieged performed prodigies of valour, and further assistance was impossible. Their capitulation was expected at any moment, unless indeed they decided to perish every man. Renaud des Baux, who was to come from Marseilles with a squadron of ten ships to defend the ports of the capital and secure the queen's flight, should the Hungarian army get possession of Naples, had been delayed by adverse winds and obliged to stop on the way. All things seemed to conspire in favour of the enemy. Louis of Tarentum, whose generous soul refused to shed the blood of his brave men in an unequal and desperate struggle, nobly sacrificed himself, and made an offer to the King of Hungary to settle their quarrel in single combat. We append the authentic letters that passed between Joan's husband and André's brother.

"Illustrious King of Hungary, who has come to invade our kingdom, we, by the grace of God King

of Jerusalem and Sicily, invite you to single combat. We know that you are in no wise disturbed by the death of your lancers or the other pagans in your suite, no more indeed than if they were dogs; but we, fearing harm to our own soldiers and men-at-arms, desire to fight with you personally, to put an end to the present war and restore peace to our kingdom. He who survives shall be king. And therefore, to ensure that this duel shall take place, we definitely propose as a site either Paris, in the presence of the King of France, or one of the towns of Perugia, Avignon, or Naples. Choose one of these four places, and send us your reply."

The King of Hungary first consulted with his council, and then replied:—

"Great King, we have read and considered your letter sent to us by the bearer of these presents, and by your invitation to a duel we are most supremely pleased; but we do not approve of any of the places you propose, since they are all suspect, and for several reasons. The King of France is your maternal grandfather, and although we are also connected by blood with him, the relationship is not so near. The town of Avignon, although nominally belonging to the sovereign pontiff, is the capital of Provence, and has always been subject to your rule. Neither have we any more confidence in Perugia, for that town is devoted to your cause.

As to the city of Naples, there is no need to say that we refuse that rendezvous, since it is in revolt against us and you are there as king. But if you wish to fight with us, let it be in the presence of the Emperor of Germany, who is lord supreme, or the King of England, who is our common friend, or the Patriarch of Aquilea, a good Catholic. If you do not approve of any of the places we propose, we shall soon be near you with our army, and so remove all difficulties and delays. Then you can come forth, and our duel can take place in the presence of both armies."

After the interchange of these two letters, Louis of Tarentum proposed nothing further. The garrison at Aversa had capitulated after a heroic resistance, and it was known only too well that if the King of Hungary could get so far as the walls of Naples, he would not have to endanger his life in order to seize that city. Happily the Provençal galleys had reached port at last. The king and the queen had only just time to embark and take refuge at Gaeta. The Hungarian army arrived at Naples. The town was on the point of yielding, and had sent messengers to the king humbly demanding peace; but the speeches of the Hungarians showed such insolence that the people, irritated past endurance, took up arms, and resolved to defend their household gods with all the energy of despair.

## CHAPTER VIII

WHILE the Neapolitans were holding out against their enemy at the Porta Capuana, a strange scene was being enacted at the other side of the town, a scene that shows us in lively colours the violence and treachery of this barbarous age. The widow of Charles of Durazzo was shut up in the castle of Ovo, and awaiting in feverish anxiety the arrival of the ship that was to take her to the queen. The poor Princess Marie, pressing her weeping children to her heart, pale, with dishevelled locks, fixed eyes, and drawn lips, was listening for every sound, distracted between hope and fear. Suddenly steps resounded along the corridor, a friendly voice was heard, Marie fell upon her knees with a cry of joy: her liberator had come.

Renaud des Baux, admiral of the Provençal squadron, respectfully advanced, followed by his eldest son Robert and his chaplain.

"God, I thank Thee!" exclaimed Marie, rising to her feet; "we are saved."

"One moment, madam," said Renaud, stopping her: "you are indeed saved, but upon one condition."

"A condition?" murmured the princess in surprise.

"Listen, madam. The King of Hungary, the avenger of André's murderers, the slayer of your husband, is at the gates of Naples; the people and soldiers will succumb, as soon as their last gallant effort is spent: the army of the conqueror is about to spread desolation and death throughout the city by fire and the sword. This time the Hungarian butcher will spare no victims: he will kill the mother before her children's eyes, the children in their mother's arms. The drawbridge of this castle is up and there are none on guard; every man who can wield a sword is now at the other end of the town. Woe to you, Marie of Durazzo, if the King of Hungary shall remember that you preferred his rival to him!"

"But have you not come here to save me?" cried Marie in a voice of anguish. "Joan, my sister, did she not command you to take me to her?"

"Your sister is no longer in the position to give orders," replied Renaud, with a disdainful smile. "She had nothing for me but thanks because I saved her life, and her husband's too, when he fled like a coward before the man whom he had dared to challenge to a duel."

Marie looked fixedly at the admiral, to assure herself that it was really he who thus arrogantly

talked about his masters. But she was terrified at his imperturbable expression, and said gently—

"As I owe my life and my children's lives solely to your generosity, I am grateful to you beyond all measure. But we must hurry, my lord: every moment I fancy I hear cries of vengeance, and you would not leave me now a prey to my brutal enemy?"

"God forbid, madam; I will save you at the risk of my life; but I have said already, I impose a condition."

"What is it?" said Marie, with forced calm.

"That you marry my son on the instant, in the presence of our reverend chaplain."

"Rash man!" cried Marie, recoiling, her face scarlet with indignation and shame; "you dare to speak thus to the sister of your legitimate sovereign? Give thanks to God that I will pardon an insult offered, as I know, in a moment of madness; try by your devotion to make me forget what you have said."

The count, without one word, signed to his son and a priest to follow, and prepared to depart. As he crossed the threshold Marie ran to him, and clasping her hands, prayed him in God's name never to forsake her. Renaud stopped.

"I might easily take my revenge," he said, "for your affront when you refuse my son in your pride;

but that business I leave to Louis of Hungary, who will acquit himself, no doubt, with credit."

"Have mercy on my poor daughters!" cried the princess; "mercy at least for my poor babes, if my own tears cannot move you."

"If you loved your children," said the admiral, frowning, "you would have done your duty at once."

"But I do not love your son!" cried Marie, proud but trembling. "O God, must a wretched woman's heart be thus trampled? You, father, a minister of truth and justice, tell this man that God must not be called on to witness an oath dragged from the weak and helpless!"

She turned to the admiral's son, and added, sobbing—

"You are young, perhaps you have loved: one day no doubt you will love. I appeal to your loyalty as a young man, to your courtesy as a knight, to all your noblest impulses; join me, and turn your father away from his fatal project. You have never seen me before: you do not know but that in my secret heart I love another. Your pride should be revolted at the sight of an unhappy woman casting herself at your feet and imploring your favour and protection. One word from you, Robert, and I shall bless you every moment of my life: the memory of you will be graven in my heart like the

memory of a guardian angel, and my children shall name you nightly in their prayers, asking God to grant your wishes. Oh, say, will you not save me? Who knows, later on I may love you—with real love."

"I must obey my father," Robert replied, never lifting his eyes to the lovely suppliant.

The priest was silent. Two minutes passed, and these four persons, each absorbed in his own thoughts, stood motionless as statues carved at the four corners of a tomb. Marie was thrice tempted to throw herself into the sea. But a confused distant sound suddenly struck upon her ears: little by little it drew nearer, voices were more distinctly heard; women in the street were uttering cries of distress—

"Fly, fly! God has forsaken us; the Hungarians are in the town!"

The tears of Marie's children were the answer to these cries; and little Margaret, raising her hands to her mother, expressed her fear in speech that was far beyond her years. Renaud, without one look at this touching picture, drew his son towards the door.

"Stay," said the princess, extending her hand with a solemn gesture: "as God sends no other aid to my children, it is His will that the sacrifice be accomplished."

She fell on her knees before the priest, bending her head like a victim who offers her neck to the executioner. Robert des Baux took his place beside her, and the priest pronounced the formula that united them for ever, consecrating the infamous deed by a sacrilegious blessing.

"All is over!" murmured Marie of Durazzo, looking tearfully on her little daughters.

"No, all is not yet over," said the admiral harshly, pushing her towards another room; "before we leave, the marriage must be consummated."

"O just God!" cried the princess, in a voice torn with anguish, and she fell swooning to the floor.

Renaud des Baux directed his ships towards Marseilles, where he hoped to get his son crowned Count of Provence, thanks to his strange marriage with Marie of Durazzo. But this cowardly act of treason was not to go unpunished. The wind rose with fury, and drove him towards Gaeta, where the queen and her husband had just arrived. Renaud bade his sailors keep in the open, threatening to throw any man into the sea who dared to disobey him. The crew at first murmured; soon cries of mutiny rose on every side. The admiral, seeing he was lost, passed from threats to prayers. But the princess, who had recovered her senses at the first thunder-clap, dragged herself up to the bridge and screamed for help.

"Come to me, Louis! Come, my barons! Death to the cowardly wretches who have outraged my honour!"

Louis of Tarentum jumped into a boat, followed by some ten of his bravest men, and, rowing rapidly, reached the ship. Then Marie told him her story in a word, and he turned upon the admiral a lightning glance, as though defying him to make any defence.

"Wretch!" cried the king, transfixing the traitor with his sword.

Then he had the son loaded with chains, and also the unworthy priest who had served as accomplice to the admiral, who now expiated his odious crime by death. He took the princess and her children in his boat, and re-entered the harbour.

The Hungarians, however, forcing one of the gates of Naples, marched triumphant to Castel Nuovo. But as they were crossing the Piazza delle Correggie, the Neapolitans perceived that the horses were so weak and the men so reduced by all they had undergone during the siege of Aversa that a mere puff of wind would dispense this phantom-like army. Changing from a state of panic to real daring, the people rushed upon their conquerors, and drove them outside the walls by which they had just entered. The sudden violent reaction broke the pride of the King of Hungary, and made him

more tractable when Clement VI decided that he ought at last to interfere. A truce was concluded first from the month of February 1350 to the beginning of April 1351, and the next year this was converted into a real peace, Joan paying to the King of Hungary the sum of 300,000 florins for the expenses of the war.

After the Hungarians had gone, the pope sent a legate to crown Joan and Louis of Tarentum, and the 25th of May, the day of Pentecost, was chosen for the ceremony. All contemporary historians speak enthusiastically of this magnificent fête. Its details have been immortalised by Giotto in the frescoes of the church which from this day bore the name of L'Incoronata. A general amnesty was declared for all who had taken part in the late wars on either side, and the king and queen were greeted with shouts of joy as they solemnly paraded beneath the canopy, with all the barons of the kingdom in their train.

But the day's joy was impaired by an accident which to a superstitious people seemed of evil augury. Louis of Tarentum, riding a richly caparisoned horse, had just passed the Porta Petruccia, when some ladies looking out from a high window threw such a quantity of flowers at the king that his frightened steed reared and broke his rein. Louis could not hold him, so jumped lightly to the

ground; but the crown fell at his feet and was broken into three pieces. On that very day the only daughter of Joan and Louis died.

But the king not wishing to sadden the brilliant ceremony with show of mourning, kept up the jousts and tournaments for three days, and in memory of his coronation instituted the order of *Chevaliers du Noeud*. But from that day begun with an omen so sad, his life was nothing but a series of disillusions. After sustaining wars in Sicily and Apulia, and quelling the insurrection of Louis of Durazzo, who ended his days in the castle of Ovo, Louis of Tarentum, worn out by a life of pleasure, his health undermined by slow disease, overwhelmed with domestic trouble, succumbed to an acute fever on the 5th of June 1362, at the age of forty-two. His body had not been laid in its royal tomb at Saint Domenico before several aspirants appeared to the hand of the queen.

One was the Prince of Majorca, the handsome youth we have already spoken of: he bore her off triumphant over all rivals, including the son of the King of France. James of Aragon had one of those faces of melancholy sweetness which no woman can resist. Great troubles nobly borne had thrown as it were a funereal veil over his youthful days: more than thirteen years he had spent shut in an iron cage; when by the aid of a false key he had

escaped from his dreadful prison, he wandered from one court to another seeking aid; it is even said that he was reduced to the lowest degree of poverty and forced to beg his bread. The young stranger's beauty and his adventures combined had impressed both Joan and Marie at the court of Avignon. Marie especially had conceived a violent passion for him, all the more so for the efforts she made to conceal it in her own bosom. Ever since James of Aragon came to Naples, the unhappy princess, married with a dagger at her throat, had desired to purchase her liberty at the expense of crime. Followed by four armed men, she entered the prison where Robert des Baux was still suffering for a fault more his father's than his own. Marie stood before the prisoner, her arms crossed, her cheeks livid, her lips trembling. It was a terrible interview. This time it was she who threatened, the man who entreated pardon. Marie was deaf to his prayers, and the head of the luckless man fell bleeding at her feet, and her men threw the body into the sea. But God never allows a murder to go unpunished: James preferred the queen to her sister, and the widow of Charles of Durazzo gained nothing by her crime but the contempt of the man she loved, and a bitter remorse which brought her while yet young to the tomb.

Joan was married in turn to James of Aragon,

son of the King of Majorca, and to Otho of Brunswick, of the imperial family of Saxony. We will pass rapidly over these years, and come to the denouement of this history of crime and expiation. James, parted from his wife, continued his stormy career, after a long contest in Spain with Peter the Cruel, who had usurped his kingdom: about the end of the year 1375 he died near Navarre. Otho also could not escape the Divine vengeance which hung over the court of Naples, but to the end he valiantly shared the queen's fortunes. Joan, since she had no lawful heir, adopted her nephew, Charles de la Paix (so called after the peace of Trevisa). He was the son of Louis Duras, who after rebelling against Louis of Tarentum, had died miserably in the castle of Ovo. The child would have shared his father's fate had not Joan interceded to spare his life, loaded him with kindness, and married him to Margaret, the daughter of her sister Marie and her cousin Charles, who was put to death by the King of Hungary.

Serious differences arose between the queen and one of her former subjects, Bartolommeo Prigiani, who had become pope under the name of Urban VI. Annoyed by the queen's opposition, the pope one day angrily said he would shut her up in a convent. Joan, to avenge the insult, openly favoured Clement VII, the anti-pope, and offered him a home in her

own castle, when, pursued by Pope Urban's army, he had taken refuge at Fondi. But the people rebelled against Clement, and killed the Archbishop of Naples, who had helped to elect him: they broke the cross that was carried in procession before the anti-pope, and hardly allowed him time to make his escape on shipboard to Provence. Urban declared that Joan was now dethroned, and released her subjects from their oath of fidelity to her, bestowing the crown of Sicily and Jerusalem upon Charles de la Paix, who marched on Naples with 8000 Hungarians. Joan, who could not believe in such base ingratitude, sent out his wife Margaret to meet her adopted son, though she might have kept her as a hostage, and his two children, Ladislaus and Joan, who became later the second queen of that name. But the victorious army soon arrived at the gates of Naples, and Charles blockaded the queen in her castle, forgetting in his ingratitude that she had saved his life and loved him like a mother.

Joan during the siege endured all the worst fatigues of war that any soldier has to bear. She saw her faithful friends fall around her wasted by hunger or decimated by sickness. When all food was exhausted, dead and decomposed bodies were thrown into the castle that they might pollute the air she breathed. Otho with his troops was kept at Aversa; Louis of Anjou, the brother of the King

of France, whom she had named as her successor when she disinherited her nephew, never appeared to help her, and the Provençal ships from Clement VII were not due to arrive until all hope must be over. Joan asked for a truce of five days, promising that, if Otho had not come to relieve her in that time, she would surrender the fortress.

On the fifth day Otho's army appeared on the side of Piedigrotta. The fight was sharp on both sides, and Joan from the top of a tower could follow with her eyes the cloud of dust raised by her husband's horse in the thickest of the battle. The victory was long uncertain: at length the prince made so bold an onset upon the royal standard, in his eagerness to meet his enemy hand to hand, that he plunged into the very middle of the army, and found himself pressed on every side. Covered with blood and sweat, his sword broken in his hand, he was forced to surrender. An hour later Charles was writing to his uncle, the King of Hungary, that Joan had fallen into his power, and he only awaited His Majesty's orders to decide her fate.

It was a fine May morning: the queen was under guard in the castle of Aversa: Otho had obtained his liberty on condition of his quitting Naples, and Louis of Anjou had at last got together an army of 50,000 men and was marching in hot haste to the conquest of the kingdom. None of this news

had reached the ears of Joan, who for some days had lived in complete isolation. The spring lavished all her glory on these enchanted plains, which have earned the name of the blessed and happy country, *campagna felice*. The orange trees were covered with sweet white blossoms, the cherries laden with ruby fruit, the olives with young emerald leaves, the pomegranate feathery with red bells; the wild mulberry, the evergreen laurel, all the strong budding vegetation, needing no help from man to flourish in this spot privileged by Nature, made one great garden, here and there interrupted by little hidden runlets. It was a forgotten Eden in this corner of the world. Joan at her window was breathing in the perfumes of spring, and her eyes misty with tears rested on a bed of flowery verdure: a light breeze, keen and balmy, blew upon her burning brow and offered a grateful coolness to her damp and fevered cheeks. Distant melodious voices, refrains of well-known songs, were all that disturbed the silence of the poor little room, the solitary nest where a life was passing away in tears and repentance, a life the most brilliant and eventful of a century of splendour and unrest.

The queen was slowly reviewing in her mind all her life since she ceased to be a child—fifty years of disillusionment and suffering. She thought first of her happy, peaceful childhood, her grandfather's

blind affection, the pure joys of her days of innocence, the exciting games with her little sister and tall cousins. Then she shuddered at the earliest thought of marriage, the constraint, the loss of liberty, the bitter regrets; she remembered with horror the deceitful words murmured in her ear, designed to sow the seeds of corruption and vice that were to poison her whole life. Then came the burning memories of her first love, the treachery and desertion of Robert of Cabane, the moments of madness passed like a dream in the arms of Bertrand of Artois—the whole drama up to its tragic denouement showed as in letters of fire on the dark background of her sombre thoughts. Then arose cries of anguish in her soul, even as on that terrible fatal night she heard the voice of André asking mercy from his murderers. A long deadly silence followed his awful struggle, and the queen saw before her eyes the carts of infamy and the torture of her accomplices. All the rest of this vision was persecution, flight, exile, remorse, punishments from God and curses from the world. Around her was a frightful solitude: husbands, lovers, kindred, friends, all were dead; all she had loved or hated in the world were now no more; her joy, pain, desire, and hope had vanished for ever. The poor queen, unable to free herself from these visions of woe, violently tore herself away from the awful reverie, and kneeling

at a prie-dieu, prayed with fervour. She was still beautiful, in spite of her extreme pallor; the noble lines of her face kept their pure oval; the fire of repentance in her great black eyes lit them up with superhuman brilliance, and the hope of pardon played in a heavenly smile upon her lips.

Suddenly the door of the room where Joan was so earnestly praying opened with a dull sound: two Hungarian barons in armour entered and signed to the queen to follow them. Joan arose silently and obeyed; but a cry of pain went up from her heart when she recognised the place where both André and Charles of Durazzo had died a violent death. But she collected her forces, and asked calmly why she was brought hither. For all answer, one of the men showed her a cord of silk and gold . . .

"May the will of a just God be done!" cried Joan, and fell upon her knees. Some minutes later she had ceased to suffer.

This was the third corpse that was thrown over the balcony at Aversa.

THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK

# THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK

FOR nearly one hundred years this curious problem has exercised the imagination of writers of fiction and of drama, and the patience of the learned in history. No subject is more obscure and elusive, and none more attractive to the general mind. It is a legend to the meaning of which none can find the key and yet in which everyone believes. Involuntarily we feel pity at the thought of that long captivity surrounded by so many extraordinary precautions, and when we dwell on the mystery which enveloped the captive, that pity is not only deepened but a kind of terror takes possession of us. It is very likely that if the name of the hero of this gloomy tale had been known at the time, he would now be forgotten. To give him a name would be to relegate him at once to the ranks of those commonplace offenders who quickly exhaust our interest and our tears. But this being, cut off from the world without leaving any discoverable trace, and whose disappearance apparently caused no void—this captive, distinguished among captives by the unexampled nature

of his punishment, a prison within a prison, as if the walls of a mere cell were not narrow enough, has come to typify for us the sum of all the human misery and suffering ever inflicted by unjust tyranny.

Who was the Man in the Mask? Was he rapt away into this silent seclusion from the luxury of a court, from the intrigues of diplomacy, from the scaffold of a traitor, from the clash of battle? What did he leave behind? Love, glory, or a throne? What did he regret when hope had fled? Did he pour forth imprecations and curses on his tortures and blaspheme against high Heaven, or did he with a sigh possess his soul in patience?

The blows of fortune are differently received according to the different characters of those on whom they fall; and each one of us who in imagination threads the subterranean passages leading to the cells of Pignerol and Exilles, and incarcerates himself in the Îles Sainte-Marguerite and in the Bastille, the successive scenes of that long-protracted agony will give the prisoner a form shaped by his own fancy and a grief proportioned to his own power of suffering. How we long to pierce the thoughts and feel the heart-beats and watch the trickling tears behind that machine-like exterior, that impassible mask! Our imagination is powerfully excited by the dumbness of that fate borne by

one whose words never reached the outward air, whose thoughts could never be read on the hidden features; by the isolation of forty years secured by twofold barriers of stone and iron, and she clothes the object of her contemplation in majestic splendour, connects the mystery which enveloped his existence with mighty interests, and persists in regarding the prisoner as sacrificed for the preservation of some dynastic secret involving the peace of the world and the stability of a throne.

And when we calmly reflect on the whole case, do we feel that our first impulsively adopted opinion was wrong? Do we regard our belief as a poetical illusion? I do not think so; on the contrary, it seems to me that our good sense approves our fancy's flight. For what can be more natural than the conviction that the secret of the name, age, and features of the captive, which was so perseveringly kept through long years at the cost of so much care, was of vital importance to the Government? No ordinary human passion, such as anger, hate, or vengeance, has so dogged and enduring a character; we feel that the measures taken were not the expression of a love of cruelty, for even supposing that Louis XIV were the most cruel of princes, would he not have chosen one of the thousand methods of torture ready to his hand before inventing a new and strange one? Moreover, why did

he voluntarily burden himself with the obligation of surrounding a prisoner with such numberless precautions and such sleepless vigilance? Must he not have feared that in spite of it all the walls behind which he concealed the dread mystery would one day let in the light? Was it not through his entire reign a source of unceasing anxiety? And yet he respected the life of the captive whom it was so difficult to hide, and the discovery of whose identity would have been so dangerous. It would have been so easy to bury the secret in an obscure grave, and yet the order was never given. Was this an expression of hate, anger, or any other passion? Certainly not; the conclusion we must come to in regard to the conduct of the king is that all the measures he took against the prisoner were dictated by purely political motives; that his conscience, while allowing him to do everything necessary to guard the secret, did not permit him to take the further step of putting an end to the days of an unfortunate man, who in all probability was guilty of no crime.

Courtiers are seldom obsequious to the enemies of their master, so that we may regard the respect and consideration shown to the Man in the Mask by the governor Saint-Mars, and the minister Louvois, as a testimony, not only to his high rank, but also to his innocence.

For my part, I make no pretensions to the erudition of the bookworm, and I cannot read the history of the Man in the Iron Mask without feeling my blood boil at the abominable abuse of power—the heinous crime of which he was the victim.

A few years ago, M. Fournier and I, thinking the subject suitable for representation on the stage, undertook to read, before dramatising it, all the different versions of the affair which had been published up to that time. Since our piece was successfully performed at the Odéon two other versions have appeared: one was in the form of a letter addressed to the Historical Institute by M. Billiard, who upheld the conclusions arrived at by Soulavie, on whose narrative our play was founded; the other was a work by the bibliophile Jacob, who followed a new system of inquiry, and whose book displayed the results of deep research and extensive reading. It did not, however, cause me to change my opinion. Even had it been published before I had written my drama, I should still have adhered to the idea as to the most probable solution of the problem which I had arrived at in 1831, not only because it was incontestably the most dramatic, but also because it is supported by those moral presumptions which have such weight with us when considering a dark and doubtful question like the one before us. It will be objected, perhaps, that

dramatic writers, in their love of the marvellous and the pathetic, neglect logic and strain after effect, their aim being to obtain the applause of the gallery rather than the approbation of the learned. But to this it may be replied that the learned on their part sacrifice a great deal to their love of dates, more or less exact; to their desire to elucidate some point which had hitherto been considered obscure, and which their explanations do not always clear up; to the temptation to display their proficiency in the ingenious art of manipulating facts and figures culled from a dozen musty volumes into one consistent whole.

Our interest in this strange case of imprisonment arises, not alone from its completeness and duration, but also from our uncertainty as to the motives from which it was inflicted. Where erudition alone cannot suffice; where bookworm after bookworm, disdaining the conjectures of his predecessors, comes forward with a new theory founded on some forgotten document he has hunted out, only to find himself in his turn pushed into oblivion by some follower in his track, we must turn for guidance to some other light than that of scholarship, especially if, on strict investigation, we find that not one learned solution rests on a sound basis of fact.

In the question before us, which, as we said before, is a double one, asking not only who was

the Man in the Iron Mask, but why he was relentlessly subjected to this torture till the moment of his death, what we need in order to restrain our fancy is mathematical demonstration, and not philosophical induction.

While I do not go so far as to assert positively that Abbé Soulavie has once for all lifted the veil which hid the truth, I am yet persuaded that no other system of research is superior to his, and that no other suggested solution has so many presumptions in its favour. I have not reached this firm conviction on account of the great and prolonged success of our drama, but because of the ease with which all the opinions adverse to those of the abbé may be annihilated by pitting them one against the other.

The qualities that make for success being quite different in a novel and in a drama, I could easily have founded a romance on the fictitious loves of Buckingham and the queen, or on a supposed secret marriage between her and Cardinal Mazarin, calling to my aid a work by Saint-Mihiel which the bibliophile declares he has never read, although it is assuredly neither rare nor difficult of access. I might also have merely expanded my drama, restoring to the personages therein their true names and relative positions, both of which the exigencies of the stage had sometimes obliged me to alter,

and while allowing them to fill the same parts, making them act more in accordance with historical fact. No fable however far-fetched, no grouping of characters however improbable, can, however, destroy the interest which the innumerable writings about the Iron Mask excite, although no two agree in details, and although each author and each witness declares himself in possession of complete knowledge. No work, however mediocre, however worthless even, which has appeared on this subject has ever failed of success, not even, for example, the strange jumble of Chevalier de Mouhy, a kind of literary braggart, who was in the pay of Voltaire, and whose work was published anonymously in 1746 by Pierre de Hondt of The Hague. It is divided into six short parts, and bears the title, *Le Masque de Fer, ou les Aventures admirables du Père et du Fils.* An absurd romance by Regnault-Warin, and one at least equally absurd by Madame Guénard, met with a like favourable reception. In writing for the theatre, an author must choose one view of a dramatic situation to the exclusion of all others, and in following out this central idea is obliged by the inexorable laws of logic to push aside everything that interferes with its development. A book, on the contrary, is written to be discussed; it brings under the notice of the reader all the evidence produced at a trial which has as yet

not reached a definite conclusion, and which in the case before us will never reach it, unless, which is most improbable, some lucky chance should lead to some new discovery.

The first mention of the prisoner is to be found in the *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'Histoire de Perse* in one 12mo volume, by an anonymous author, published by the *Compagnie des Libraires Associés d'Amsterdam* in 1745.

"Not having any other purpose," says the author (page 20, 2nd edit.), "than to relate *facts which are not known, or about which no one has written, or about which it is impossible to be silent,* we refer at once to a fact which has hitherto almost escaped notice concerning Prince Giafer (Louis de Bourbon, Comte de Vermandois, son of Louis XIV and Mademoiselle de la Vallière), who was visited by Ali-Momajou (the Duc d'Orléans, the regent) in the fortress of Ispahan (the Bastille), in which he had been imprisoned for *several years.* This visit had probably no other motive than to make sure that this prince was really alive, he having been reputed dead of the plague for over thirty years, and his obsequies having been celebrated in presence of an entire army.

"Cha-Abas (Louis XIV) had a legitimate son, Séphi-Mirza (Louis, Dauphin of France), and a

natural son, Giafer. These two princes, as dissimilar in character as in birth, were always rivals and always at enmity with each other. One day Giafer so far forgot himself as to strike Séphi-Mirza. Cha-Abas having heard of the insult offered to the heir to the throne, assembled his most trusted councillors, and laid the conduct of the culprit before them—conduct which, according to the law of the country, was punishable with death, an opinion in which they all agreed. One of the councillors, however, sympathising more than the others with the distress of Cha-Abas, suggested that Giafer should be sent to the army, which was then on the frontiers of Feldrun (Flanders), and that his death from plague should be given out a few days after his arrival. Then, while the whole army was celebrating his obsequies, he should be carried off by night, in the greatest secrecy, to the stronghold on the isle of Ormus (Sainte-Marguérite), and there imprisoned for life.

"This course was adopted, and carried out by faithful and discreet agents. The prince, whose premature death was mourned by the army, being carried by unfrequented roads to the isle of Ormus, was placed in the custody of the commandant of the island, who had received orders beforehand not to allow any person whatever to see the prisoner. A single servant who was in possession

of the secret was killed by the escort on the journey, and his face so disfigured by dagger thrusts that he could not be recognised.

"The commandant treated his prisoner with the most profound respect; he waited on him at meals himself, taking the dishes from the cooks at the door of the apartment, none of whom ever looked on the face of Giafer. One day it occurred to the prince to scratch his name on the back of a plate with his knife. One of the servants into whose hands the plate fell ran with it at once to the commandant, hoping he would be pleased and reward the bearer; but the unfortunate man was greatly mistaken, for he was at once made away with, that his knowledge of such an important secret might be buried with himself.

"Giafer remained several years in the castle Ormus, and was then transported to the fortress of Ispahan; the commandant of Ormus having received the governorship of Ispahan as a reward for faithful service.

"At Ispahan, as at Ormus, whenever it was necessary on account of illness or any other cause to allow anyone to approach the prince, he was always masked; and several trustworthy persons have asserted that they had seen the masked prisoner often, and had noticed that he used the familiar '*tu*' when addressing the governor, while

the latter showed his charge the greatest respect.

"As Giafer survived Cha-Abas and Séphi-Mirza by many years, it may be asked why he was never set at liberty; but it must be remembered it would have been impossible to restore a prince to his rank and dignities whose tomb actually existed, and of whose burial there were not only living witnesses but documentary proofs, the authenticity of which it would have been useless to deny, so firm was the belief, which has lasted down to the present day, that Giafer died of the plague in camp when with the army on the frontiers of Flanders. Ali-Homajou died shortly after the visit he paid to Giafer."

This version of the story, which is the original source of all the controversy on the subject, was at first generally received as true. On a critical examination it fitted in very well with certain events which took place in the reign of Louis XIV.

The Comte de Vermandois had in fact left the court for the camp very soon after his reappearance there, for he had been banished by the king from his presence some time before for having, in company with several young nobles, indulged in the most reprehensible excesses.

"The king," says Mademoiselle de Montpensier (*Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier,* vol. xliii. p. 474, of *Mémoires Relatifs à l'Histoire de*

*France*, Second Series, published by Petitot), "had not been satisfied with his conduct and refused to see him. The young prince had caused his mother much sorrow, but had been so well lectured that it was believed that he had at last turned over a new leaf." He only remained four days at court, reached the camp before Courtrai early in November 1683, was taken ill on the evening of the 12th, and died on the 19th of the same month of a malignant fever. Mademoiselle de Montpensier says that the Comte de Vermandois "fell ill from drink."

There are, of course, objections of all kinds to this theory.

For if, during the four days the comte was at court, he had struck the dauphin, everyone would have heard of the monstrous crime, and yet it is nowhere spoken of, except in the *Mémoires de Perse*. What renders the story of the blow still more improbable is the difference in age between the two princes. The dauphin, who already had a son, the Duc de Bourgogne, more than a year old, was born the 1st November 1661, and was therefore six years older than the Comte de Vermandois. But the most complete answer to the tale is to be found in a letter written by Barbézieux to Saint-Mars, dated the 13th August 1691:—

"When you have any information to send me

relative to the prisoner who has been in your charge for twenty years, I most earnestly enjoin on you to take the same precautions as when you write to M. de Louvois."

The Comte de Vermandois, the official registration of whose death bears the date 1685, cannot have been twenty years a prisoner in 1691.

Six years after the Man in the Mask had been thus delivered over to the curiosity of the public, the *Siècle de Louis XIV* (2 vols. octavo, Berlin, 1751) was published by Voltaire under the pseudonym of M. de Francheville. Everyone turned to this work, which had been long expected, for details relating to the mysterious prisoner about whom everyone was talking.

Voltaire ventured at length to speak more openly of the prisoner than anyone had hitherto done, and to treat as a matter of history "an event long ignored by all historians." (vol. ii. p. 11, 1st edition, chap. xxv.). He assigned an approximate date to the beginning of this captivity, "some months after the death of Cardinal Mazarin" (1661); he gave a description of the prisoner, who according to him was "young and dark-complexioned; his figure was above the middle height and well proportioned; his features were exceedingly handsome, and his bearing was noble. When he spoke his

voice inspired interest; he never complained of his lot, and gave no hint as to his rank." Nor was the mask forgotten: "The part which covered the chin was furnished with steel springs, which allowed the prisoner to eat without uncovering his face." And, lastly, he fixed the date of the death of the nameless captive, who "was buried," he says, "in 1704, by night, in the parish church of Saint-Paul."

Voltaire's narrative coincided with the account given in the *Mémoires de Perse,* save for the omission of the incident which, according to the *Mémoires*, led in the first instance to the imprisonment of Giafer. "The prisoner," says Voltaire, "was sent to the Îles Sainte-Marguerite, and afterwards to the Bastille, in charge of a trusty official; he wore his mask on the journey, and his escort had orders to shoot him if he took it off. The Marquis de Louvois visited him while he was on the islands, and when speaking to him stood all the time in a respectful attitude. The prisoner was removed to the Bastille in 1690, where he was lodged as comfortably as could be managed in that building; he was supplied with everything he asked for, especially with the finest linen and the costliest lace, in both of which his taste was perfect; he had a guitar to play on, his table was excellent, and the governor rarely sat in his presence."

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Voltaire added a few further details which had been given him by M. de Bernaville, the successor of M. de Saint-Mars, and by an old physician of the Bastille who had attended the prisoner whenever his health required a doctor, but who had never seen his face, although he had "often seen his tongue and his body." He also asserted that M. de Chamillart was the last minister who was in the secret, and that when his son-in-law, Marshal de la Feuillade, besought him on his knees, de Chamillart being on his deathbed, to tell him the name of the Man in the Iron Mask, the minister replied that he was under a solemn oath never to reveal the secret, it being an affair of state. To all these details, which the marshal acknowledges to be correct, Voltaire adds a remarkable note: "What increases our wonder is, that when the unknown captive was sent to the Îles Sainte-Marguerite no personage of note disappeared from the European stage."

The story of the Comte de Vermandois and the blow was treated as an absurd and romantic invention, which does not even attempt to keep within the bounds of the possible, by Baron C. (according to P. Marchand, Baron Crunyngen) in a letter inserted in the *Bibliothèque raisonnée des Ouvrages des Savants de l'Europe*, June 1745. The discussion was revived somewhat later, however, and a

few Dutch scholars were supposed to be responsible for a new theory founded on history; the foundations proving somewhat shaky, however,—a quality which it shares, we must say, with all the other theories which have ever been advanced.

According to this new theory, the masked prisoner was a young foreign nobleman, groom of the chambers to Anne of Austria, and the real father of Louis XIV. This anecdote appears first in a duodecimo volume printed by Pierre Marteau at Cologne in 1692, and which bears the title, *The Loves of Anne of Austria, Consort of Louis XIII, with M. le C. D. R., the Real Father of Louis XIV, King of France; being a Minute Account of the Measures taken to give an Heir to the Throne of France, the Influences at Work to bring this to pass, and the Dénoûment of the Comedy.*

This libel ran through five editions, bearing date successively, 1692, 1693, 1696, 1722, and 1738. In the title of the edition of 1696 the words "Cardinal de Richelieu" are inserted in place of the initials "C. D. R.," but that this is only a printer's error everyone who reads the work will perceive. Some have thought the three letters stood for Comte de Rivière, others for Comte de Rochefort, whose *Mémoires* compiled by Sandras de Courtilz supply these initials. The author of the book was an Orange writer in the pay of William III, and its

object was, he says, "to unveil the great mystery of iniquity which hid the true origin of Louis XIV." He goes on to remark that "the knowledge of this fraud, although comparatively rare outside France, was widely spread within her borders. The well-known coldness of Louis XIII, the extraordinary birth of Louis-Dieudonné, so called because he was born in the twenty-third year of a childless marriage, and several other remarkable circumstances connected with the birth, all point clearly to a father other than the prince, who with great effrontery is passed off by his adherents as such. The famous barricades of Paris, and the organised revolt led by distinguished men against Louis XIV on his accession to the throne, proclaimed aloud the king's illegitimacy, so that it rang through the country; and as the accusation had reason on its side, hardly anyone doubted its truth."

We give below a short abstract of the narrative, the plot of which is rather skilfully constructed:—

"Cardinal Richelieu, looking with satisfied pride at the love of Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, brother of the king, for his niece Parisiatis (Madame de Combalet), formed the plan of uniting the young couple in marriage. Gaston taking the suggestion as an insult, struck the cardinal. Pére Joseph then tried to gain the cardinal's consent and that of his niece

to an attempt to deprive Gaston of the throne, which the childless marriage of Louis XIII seemed to assure him. A young man, the C. D. R. of the book, was introduced into Anne of Austria's room, who though a wife in name had long been a widow in reality. She defended herself but feebly, and on seeing the cardinal next day said to him, "Well, you have had your wicked will; but take good care, sir cardinal, that I may find above the mercy and goodness which you have tried by many pious sophistries to convince me is awaiting me. Watch over my soul, I charge you, for I have yielded!' The queen having given herself up to love for some time, the joyful news that she would soon become a mother began to spread over the kingdom. In this manner was born Louis XIV, the putative son of Louis XIII. If this instalment of the tale be favourably received, says the pamphleteer, the sequel will soon follow, in which the sad fate of C. D. R. will be related, who was made to pay dearly for his short-lived pleasure."

Although the first part was a great success, the promised sequel never appeared. It must be admitted that such a story, though it never convinced a single person of the illegitimacy of Louis XIV, was an excellent prologue to the tale of the unfortunate lot of the Man in the Iron Mask, and increased

the interest and curiosity with which that singular historical mystery was regarded. But the views of the Dutch scholars thus set forth met with little credence, and were soon forgotten in a new solution.

The third historian to write about the prisoner of the Iles Sainte-Marguerite was Lagrange-Chancel. He was just twenty-nine years of age when, excited by Fréron's hatred of Voltaire, he addressed a letter from his country place, Antoniat, in Perigord, to the *Année Littéraire* (vol. iii. p. 188), demolishing the theory advanced in the *Siècle de Louis XIV*, and giving facts which he had collected whilst himself imprisoned in the same place as the unknown prisoner twenty years later.

"My detention in the Iles-Saint-Marguerite," says Lagrange-Chancel, "brought many things to my knowledge which a more painstaking historian than M. de Voltaire would have taken the trouble to find out; for at the time when I was taken to the islands the imprisonment of the Man in the Iron Mask was no longer regarded as a state secret. This extraordinary event, which M. de Voltaire places in 1662, a few months after the death of Cardinal Mazarin, did not take place till 1669, eight years after the death of His Eminence. M. de La Motte-Guèrin, commandant of the islands in my

time, assured me that the prisoner was the Duc de Beaufort, who was reported killed at the siege of Candia, but whose body had never been recovered, as all the narratives of that event agree in stating. He also told me that M. de Saint-Mars, who succeeded Pignerol as governor of the islands, showed great consideration for the prisoner, that he waited on him at table, that the service was of silver, and that the clothes supplied to the prisoner were as costly as he desired; that when he was ill and in need of a physician or surgeon, he was obliged under pain of death to wear his mask in their presence, but that when he was alone he was permitted to pull out the hairs of his beard with steel tweezers, which were kept bright and polished. I saw a pair of these which had been actually used for this purpose in the possession of M. de Formanoir, nephew of Saint-Mars, and lieutenant of a Free Company raised for the purpose of guarding the prisoners. Several persons told me that when Saint-Mars, who had been placed over the Bastille, conducted his charge thither, the latter was heard to say behind his iron mask, 'Has the king designs on my life?' To which Saint-Mars replied, 'No, my prince; your life is safe: you must only let yourself be guided.'

"I also learned from a man called Dubuisson, cashier to the well-known Samuel Bernard, who, having been imprisoned for some years in the Bas-

tille, was removed to the Iles Sainte-Marguerite, where he was confined along with some others in a room exactly over the one occupied by the unknown prisoner. He told me that they were able to communicate with him by means of the flue of the chimney, but on asking him why he persisted in not revealing his name and the cause of his imprisonment, he replied that such an avowal would be fatal not only to him but to those to whom he made it.

"Whether it were so or not, to-day the name and rank of this political victim are secrets the preservation of which is no longer necessary to the State, and I have thought that to tell the public what I know would cut short the long chain of circumstances which everyone was forging according to his fancy, instigated thereto by an author whose gift of relating the most impossible events in such a manner as to make them seem true has won for all his writings such success—even for his *Vie de Charles XII.*"

This theory, according to Jacob, is more probable than any of the others.

"Beginning with the year 1664," he says, "the Duc de Beaufort had by his insubordination and levity endangered the success of several maritime expeditions. In October 1666 Louis XIV remon-

strated with him with much tact, begging him to try to make himself more and more capable in the service of his king by cultivating the talents with which he was endowed, and ridding himself of the faults which spoilt his conduct. 'I do not doubt,' he concludes, 'that you will be all the more grateful to me for this mark of my benevolence towards you, when you reflect how few kings have ever shown their goodwill in a similar manner'" (*Oeuvres de Louis XIV*, vol. v. p. 388). Several calamities in the royal navy are known to have been brought about by the Duc de Beaufort. M. Eugène Sue, in his *Histoire de la Marine*, which is full of new and curious information, has drawn a very good picture of the position of the "*roi des halles*," the "king of the markets," in regard to Colbert and Louis XIV. Colbert wished to direct all the manœuvres of the fleet from his study, while it was commanded by the naval grandmaster in the capricious manner which might be expected from his factious character and love of bluster (Eugène Sue, vol. i., *Pièces Justificatives*). In 1699 Louis XIV sent the Duc de Beaufort to the relief of Candia, which the Turks were besieging. Seven hours after his arrival Beaufort was killed in a sortie. The Duc de Navailles, who shared with him the command of the French squadron, simply reported his death as follows: "He met a body of Turks who were pressing our

troops hard: placing himself at the head of the latter, he fought valiantly, but at length his soldiers abandoned him, *and we have not been able to learn his fate"* (*Mémoires du Duc de Navailles,* book iv. p. 243).

The report of his death spread rapidly through France and Italy; magnificent funeral services were held in Paris, Rome, and Venice, and funeral orations delivered. Nevertheless, many believed that he would one day reappear, as his body had never been recovered.

Guy Patin mentions this belief, which he did not share, in two of his letters:—

" Several wagers have been laid that M. de Beaufort is not dead! *O utinam!* " (Guy Patin, September 26, 1669).

" It is said that M. de Vivonne has been granted by commission the post of vice-admiral of France for twenty years; but there are many who believe that the Duc de Beaufort is not dead, but imprisoned in some Turkish island. Believe this who may, *I* don't; he is really dead, and the last thing I should desire would be to be as dead as he " (*Ibid.,* January 14, 1670).

The following are the objections to this theory:—

" In several narratives written by eye-witnesses

of the siege of Candia," says Jacob, "it is related that the Turks, according to their custom, despoiled the body and cut off the head of the Duc de Beaufort on the field of battle, and that the latter was afterwards exhibited at Constantinople; and this may account for some of the details given by Sandras de Courtilz in his *Mémoires du Marquis de Montbrun* and his *Mémoires d'Artagnan*, for one can easily imagine that the naked, headless body might escape recognition. M. Eugène Sue, in his *Histoire de la Marine* (vol. ii. chap. 6), had adopted this view, which coincides with the accounts left by Philibert de Jarry and the Marquis de Ville, the MSS. of whose letters and *Mémoires* are to be found in the Bibliothèque du Roi.

"In the first volume of the *Histoire de la Détention des Philosophes et des Gens de Lettres à la Bastille, etc.*, we find the following passage:—

"Without dwelling on the difficulty and danger of an abduction, which an Ottoman scimitar might any day during this memorable siege render unnecessary, we shall restrict ourselves to declaring positively that the correspondence of Saint-Mars from 1669 to 1680 gives us no ground for supposing that the governor of Pignerol had any great prisoner of state in his charge during that period of time, except Fouquet and Lauzun.'"

While we profess no blind faith in the conclusions arrived at by the learned critic, we would yet add to the considerations on which he relies another, viz. that it is most improbable that Louis XIV should ever have considered it necessary to take such rigorous measures against the Duc de Beaufort. Truculent and self-confident as he was, he never acted against the royal authority in such a manner as to oblige the king to strike him down in secret; and it is difficult to believe that Louis XIV, peaceably seated on his throne, with all the enemies of his minority under his feet, should have revenged himself on the duke as an old Frondeur.

The critic calls our attention to another fact also adverse to the theory under consideration. The Man in the Iron Mask loved fine linen and rich lace, he was reserved in character and possessed of extreme refinement, and none of this suits the portraits of the *roi des halles* which contemporary historians have drawn.

Regarding the anagram of the name Marchiali (the name under which the death of the prisoner was registered), *hic amiral*, as a proof, we cannot think that the gaolers of Pignerol amused themselves in propounding conundrums to exercise the keen intellect of their contemporaries; and moreover the same anagram would apply equally well to the Count of Vermandois, who was

made admiral when only twenty-two months old. Abbé Papon, in his roamings through Provence, paid a visit to the prison in which the Iron Mask was confined, and thus speaks:—

"It was to the Îles Sainte-Marguerite that the famous prisoner with the iron mask whose name has never been discovered, was transported at the end of the last century; very few of those attached to his service were allowed to speak to him. One day, as M. de Saint-Mars was conversing with him, standing outside his door, in a kind of corridor, so as to be able to see from a distance everyone who approached, the son of one of the governor's friends, hearing the voices, came up; Saint-Mars quickly closed the door of the room, and, rushing to meet the young man, asked him with an air of great anxiety if he had overheard anything that was said. Having convinced himself that he had heard nothing, the governor sent the young man away the same day, and wrote to the father that the adventure was like to have cost the son dear, and that he had sent him back to his home to prevent any further imprudence.

"I was curious enough to visit the room in which the unfortunate man was imprisoned, on the 2nd of February 1778. It is lighted by one window to the north, overlooking the sea, about fifteen feet

above the terrace where the sentries paced to and fro. This window was pierced through a very thick wall and the embrasure barricaded by three iron bars, thus separating the prisoner from the sentries by a distance of over two fathoms. I found an officer of the Free Company in the fortress who was nigh on fourscore years old; he told me that his father, who had belonged to the same Company, had often related to him how a friar had seen something white floating on the water under the prisoner's window. On being fished out and carried to M. de Saint-Mars, it proved to be a shirt of very fine material, loosely folded together, and covered with writing from end to end. M. de Saint-Mars spread it out and read a few words, then turning to the friar who had brought it he asked him in an embarrassed manner if he had been led by curiosity to read any of the writing. The friar protested repeatedly that he had not read a line, but nevertheless he was found dead in bed two days later. This incident was told so often to my informant by his father and by the chaplain of the fort of that time that he regarded it as incontestably true. The following fact also appears to me to be equally well established by the testimony of many witnesses. I collected all the evidence I could on the spot, and also in the Lerins monastery, where the tradition is preserved.

"A female attendant being wanted for the prisoner, a woman of the village of Mongin offered herself for the place, being under the impression that she would thus be able to make her children's fortune; but on being told that she would not only never be allowed to see her children again, but would be cut off from the rest of the world as well, she refused to be shut up with a prisoner whom it cost so much to serve. I may mention here that at the two outer angles of the wall of the fort which faced the sea two sentries were placed, with orders to fire on any boat which approached within a certain distance.

"The prisoner's personal attendant died in the Îles Sainte-Marguerite. The brother of the officer whom I mentioned above was partly in the confidence of M. de Saint-Mars, and he often told how he was summoned to the prison once at midnight and ordered to remove a corpse, and that he carried it on his shoulders to the burial-place, feeling certain it was the prisoner who was dead; but it was only his servant, and it was then that an effort was made to supply his place by a female attendant."

Abbé Papon gives some curious details, hitherto unknown to the public, but as he mentions no names his narrative cannot be considered as evidence.

Voltaire never replied to Lagrange-Chancel, who died the same year in which his letter was published. Fréron desiring to revenge himself for the scathing portrait which Voltaire had drawn of him in the *Écossaise,* called to his assistance a more redoubtable adversary than Lagrange-Chancel. Sainte-Foix had brought to the front a brand new theory, founded on a passage by Hume in an article in the *Année Littéraire* (1768, vol. iv.), in which he maintained that the Man in the Iron Mask was the Duke of Monmouth, a natural son of Charles II, who was found guilty of high treason and beheaded in London on the 15th July 1685.

This is what the English historian says:—

"It was commonly reported in London that the Duke of Monmouth's life had been saved, one of his adherents who bore a striking resemblance to the duke having consented to die in his stead, while the real culprit was secretly carried off to France, there to undergo a lifelong imprisonment."

The great affection which the English felt for the Duke of Monmouth, and his own conviction that the people only needed a leader to induce them to shake off the yoke of James II, led him to undertake an enterprise which might possibly have succeeded had it been carried out with prudence. He landed

at Lyme, in Dorset, with only one hundred and twenty men; six thousand soon gathered round his standard; a few towns declared in his favour; he caused himself to be proclaimed king, affirming that he was born in wedlock, and that he possessed the proofs of the secret marriage of Charles II and Lucy Walters, his mother. He met the Royalists on the battlefield, and victory seemed to be on his side, when just at the decisive moment his ammunition ran short. Lord Gray, who commanded the cavalry, beat a cowardly retreat, the unfortunate Monmouth was taken prisoner, brought to London, and beheaded.

The details published in the *Siècle de Louis XIV* as to the personal appearance of the masked prisoner might have been taken as a description of Monmouth, who possessed great physical beauty. Sainte-Foix had collected every scrap of evidence in favour of his solution of the mystery, making use even of the following passage from an anonymous romance called *The Loves of Charles II and James II, Kings of England*:—

"The night of the pretended execution of the Duke of Monmouth, the king, attended by three men, came to the Tower and summoned the duke to his presence. A kind of loose cowl was thrown over his head, and he was put into a carriage, into

which the king and his attendants also got, and was driven away."

Sainte-Foix also referred to the alleged visit of Saunders, confessor to James II, paid to the Duchess of Portsmouth after the death of that monarch, when the duchess took occasion to say that she could never forgive King James for consenting to Monmouth's execution, in spite of the oath he had taken on the sacred elements at the deathbed of Charles II that he would never take his natural brother's life, even in case of rebellion. To this the priest replied quickly, "The king kept his oath."

Hume also records this solemn oath, but we cannot say that all the historians agree on this point. *The Universal History* by Guthrie and Gray, and the *Histoire d'Angleterre* by Rapin, Thoyras, and de Barrow, do not mention it.

"Further," wrote Sainte-Foix, "an English surgeon called Nelaton, who frequented the Café Procope, much affected by men of letters, often related that during the time he was senior apprentice to a surgeon who lived near the Porte Saint-Antoine, he was once taken to the Bastille to bleed a prisoner. He was conducted to this prisoner's room by the governor himself, and found the patient suffering from violent headache. He spoke with an English

accent, wore a gold-flowered dressing-gown of black and orange, and had his face covered by a napkin knotted behind his head."

This story does not hold water: it would be difficult to form a mask out of a napkin; the Bastille had a resident surgeon of its own as well as a physician and apothecary; no one could gain access to a prisoner without a written order from a minister, even the Viaticum could only be introduced by the express permission of the lieutenant of police.

This theory met at first with no objections, and seemed to be going to oust all the others, thanks, perhaps, to the combative and restive character of its promulgator, who bore criticism badly, and whom no one cared to incense, his sword being even more redoubtable than his pen.

It was known that when Saint-Mars journeyed with his prisoner to the Bastille, they had put up on the way at Palteau, in Champagne, a property belonging to the governor. Fréron therefore addressed himself to a grand-nephew of Saint-Mars, who had inherited this estate, asking if he could give him any information about this visit. The following reply appeared in the *Année Littéraire* (June 1768):—

"As it appears from the letter of M. de Sainte-Foix from which you quote that the Man in the Iron

Mask still exercises the fancy of your journalists, I am willing to tell you all I know about the prisoner. He was known in the islands of Sainte-Marguerite and at the Bastille as 'La Tour.' The governor and all the other officials showed him great respect, and supplied him with everything he asked for that could be granted to a prisoner. He often took exercise in the yard of the prison, but never without his mask on. It was not till the *Siècle* of M. de Voltaire appeared that I learned that the mask was of iron and furnished with springs; it may be that the circumstance was overlooked, but he never wore it except when taking the air, or when he had to appear before a stranger.

"M. de Blainvilliers, an infantry officer who was acquainted with M. de Saint-Mars both at Pignerol and Sainte-Marguerite, has often told me that the lot of 'La Tour' greatly excited his curiosity, and that he had once borrowed the clothes and arms of a soldier whose turn it was to be sentry on the terrace under the prisoner's window at Sainte-Marguerite, and undertaken the duty himself; that he had seen the prisoner distinctly, without his mask; that his face was white, that he was tall and well proportioned, except that his ankles were too thick, and that his hair was white, although he appeared to be still in the prime of life. He passed the whole of the night in question pacing to and fro in his

room. Blainvilliers added that he was always dressed in brown, that he had plenty of fine linen and books, that the governor and the other officers always stood uncovered in his presence till he gave them leave to cover and sit down, and that they often bore him company at table.

"In 1698 M. de Saint-Mars was promoted from the governorship of the Îles Sainte-Marguerite to that of the Bastille. In moving thither, accompanied by his prisoner, he made his estate of Palteau a halting-place. The masked man arrived in a litter which preceded that of M. de Saint-Mars, and several mounted men rode beside it. The peasants were assembled to greet their liege lord. M. de Saint-Mars dined with his prisoner, who sat with his back to the dining-room windows, which looked out on the court. None of the peasants whom I have questioned were able to see whether the man kept his mask on while eating, but they all noticed that M. de Saint-Mars, who sat opposite to his charge, laid two pistols beside his plate; that only one footman waited at table, who went into the antechamber to change the plates and dishes, always carefully closing the dining-room door behind him. When the prisoner crossed the courtyard his face was covered with a black mask, but the peasants could see his lips and teeth, and remarked that he was tall, and had white hair. M. de Saint-Mars

slept in a bed placed beside the prisoner's. M. de Blainvilliers told me also that 'as soon as he was dead, which happened in 1704, he was buried at Saint-Paul's,' and that 'the coffin was filled with substances which would rapidly consume the body.' He added, 'I never heard that the masked man spoke with an English accent.'"

Sainte-Foix proved the story related by M. de Blainvilliers to be little worthy of belief, showing by a circumstance mentioned in the letter that the imprisoned man could not be the Duc de Beaufort; witness the epigram of Madame de Choisy, "M. de Beaufort longs to bite and can't," whereas the peasants had seen the prisoner's teeth through his mask. It appeared as if the theory of Sainte-Foix were going to stand, when a Jesuit father, named Griffet, who was confessor at the Bastille, devoted chapter xiii. of his *Traité des différentes Sortes de Preuves qui servent à établir la Vérité dans l'Histoire* (12mo, Liège, 1769) to the consideration of the Iron Mask. He was the first to quote an authentic document which certifies that the Man in the Iron Mask about whom there was so much disputing really existed. This was the written journal of M. du Jonca, King's Lieutenant in the Bastille in 1698, from which Père Griffet took the following passage:—

"On Thursday, September the 8th, 1698, at three o'clock in the afternoon, M. de Saint-Mars, the new governor of the Bastille, entered upon his duties. He arrived from the islands of Sainte-Marguerite, bringing with him in a litter a prisoner whose name is a secret, and whom he had had under his charge there, and at Pignerol. This prisoner, who was always masked, was at first placed in the Bassinière tower, where he remained until the evening. At nine o'clock p.m. I took him to the third room of the Bertaudière tower, which I had had already furnished before his arrival with all needful articles, having received orders to do so from M. de Saint-Mars. While I was showing him the way to his room, I was accompanied by M. Rosarges, who had also arrived along with M. de Saint-Mars, and whose office it was to wait on the said prisoner, whose table is to be supplied by the governor."

Du Jonca's diary records the death of the prisoner in the following terms:—

"Monday, 19th November 1703. The unknown prisoner, who always wore a black velvet mask, and whom M. de Saint-Mars brought with him from the Îles Sainte-Marguerite, and whom he had so long in charge, felt slightly unwell yesterday on coming back from mass. He died to-day at 10 p.m.

without having a serious illness, indeed it could not have been slighter. M. Guiraut, our chaplain, confessed him yesterday, but as his death was quite unexpected he did not receive the last sacraments, although the chaplain was able to exhort him up to the moment of his death. He was buried on Tuesday the 20th November at 4 p.m. in the burial-ground of St. Paul's, our parish church. The funeral expenses amounted to 40 livres."

His name and age were withheld from the priests of the parish. The entry made in the parish register, which Père Griffet also gives, is in the following words:—

"On the 19th November 1703, Marchiali, aged about forty-five, died in the Bastille, whose body was buried in the graveyard of Saint-Paul's, his parish, on the 20th instant, in the presence of M. Rosarges and of M. Reilh, Surgeon-Major of the Bastille.

"(*Signed*) ROSARGES.
"REILH."

As soon as he was dead everything belonging to him, without exception, was burned; such as his linen, clothes, bed and bedding, rugs, chairs, and even the doors of the room he occupied. His ser-

vice of plate was melted down, the walls of his room were scoured and whitewashed, the very floor was renewed, from fear of his having hidden a note under it, or left some mark by which he could be recognised.

Père Griffet did not agree with the opinions of either Lagrange-Chancel or Sainte-Foix, but seemed to incline towards the theory set forth in the *Mémoires de Perse,* against which no irrefutable objections had been advanced. He concluded by saying that before arriving at any decision as to who the prisoner really was, it would be necessary to ascertain the exact date of his arrival at Pignerol.

Sainte-Foix hastened to reply, upholding the soundness of the views he had advanced. He procured from Arras a copy of an entry in the registers of the Cathedral Chapter, stating that Louis XIV had written with his own hand to the said Chapter that they were to admit to burial the body of the Comte de Vermandois, who had died in the city of Courtrai; that he desired that the deceased should be interred in the centre of the choir, in the vault in which lay the remains of Elisabeth, Comtesse de Vermandois, wife of Philip of Alsace, Comte de Flanders, who had died in 1182. It is not to be supposed that Louis XIV would have chosen a family vault in which to bury a log of wood.

Sainte-Foix was, however, not acquainted with

the letter of Barbézieux, dated the 13th August 1691, to which we have already referred, as a proof that the prisoner was not the Comte de Vermandois; it is equally a proof that he was not the Duke of Monmouth, as Sainte-Foix maintained; for sentence was passed on the Duke of Monmouth in 1685, so that it could not be of him either that Barbézieux wrote in 1691, "The prisoner whom you have had in charge for *twenty years.*"

In the very year in which Sainte-Foix began to flatter himself that his theory was successfully established, Baron Heiss brought a new one forward, in a letter dated "Phalsburg, 28th June 1770," and addressed to the *Journal Enclycopédique.* It was accompanied by a letter translated from the Italian which appeared in the *Histoire Abrégée de l'Europe* by Jacques Bernard, published by Claude Jordan, Leyden, 1685-87, in detached sheets. This letter stated (August 1687, article *Mantoue*) that the Duke of Mantua being desirous to sell his capital, Casale, to the King of France, had been dissuaded therefrom by his secretary, and induced to join the other princes of Italy in their endeavours to thwart the ambitious schemes of Louis XIV. The Marquis d'Arcy, French ambassador to the court of Savoy, having been informed of the secretary's influence, distinguished him by all kinds of civilities, asked him frequently to table,

and at last invited him to join a large hunting party two or three leagues outside Turin. They set out together, but at a short distance from the city were surrounded by a dozen horsemen, who carried off the secretary, *disguised him, put a mask on him, and took him to Pignerol.* He was not kept long in this fortress, as it was *too near the Italian frontier, and although he was carefully guarded it was feared that the walls would speak;* so he was transferred to the Îles Sainte-Marguerite, *where he is at present in the custody of M. de Saint-Mars.*

This theory, of which much was heard later, did not at first excite much attention. What is certain is that the Duke of Mantua's secretary, by name Matthioli, was arrested in 1679 through the agency of Abbé d'Estrade and M. de Catinat, and taken with the utmost secrecy to Pignerol, where he was imprisoned and placed in charge of M. de Saint-Mars. He must not, however, be confounded with the Man in the Iron Mask.

Catinat says of Matthioli in a letter to Louvois: "No one knows the name of this *knave.*"

Louvois writes to Saint-Mars: "I admire your patience in waiting for an order to treat such a rogue as he deserves, when he treats you with disrespect."

Saint-Mars replies to the minister: "I have

charged Blainvilliers to show him a cudgel and tell him that with its aid we can make the froward meek."

Again Louvois writes: "The clothes *of such people* must be made to last three or four years."

This cannot have been the nameless prisoner who was treated with such consideration, before whom Louvois stood bare-headed, who was supplied with fine linen and lace, and so on.

Altogether, we gather from the correspondence of Saint-Mars that the unhappy man alluded to above was confined along with a mad Jacobin, and at last became mad himself, and succumbed to his misery in 1686.

Voltaire, who was probably the first to supply such inexhaustible food for controversy, kept silence and took no part in the discussions. But when all the theories had been presented to the public, he set about refuting them. He made himself very merry, in the seventh edition of *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie distibuées en forme de Dictionnaire* (Geneva, 1791), over the complaisance attributed to Louis XIV in acting as police-sergeant and gaoler for James II, William III, and Anne, with all of whom he was at war. Persisting still in taking 1661 or 1662 as the date when the incarceration of the masked prisoner began, he attacks the opinions

advanced by Lagrange-Chancel and Père Griffet, which they had drawn from the anonymous *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'Histoire de Perse.* "Having thus dissipated all these illusions," he says, "let us now consider who the *masked* prisoner was, and how old he was when he died. It is evident that if he was never allowed to walk in the courtyard of the Bastille or to see a physician *without his mask*, it must have been lest his *too striking* resemblance to someone should be remarked; he could show his tongue but not his face. As regards his age, he himself told the apothecary at the Bastille, a few days before his death, that he thought he was about sixty; this I have often heard from a son-in-law to this apothecary, M. Marsoban, surgeon to Marshal Richelieu, and afterwards to the regent, the Duc d'Orléans. The writer of this article knows perhaps more on this subject than Père Griffet. But he has said his say."

This article in the *Questions on the Encyclopaedia* was followed by some remarks from the pen of the publisher, which are also, however, attributed by the publishers of Kelh to Voltaire himself. The publisher, who sometimes calls himself the author, puts aside without refutation all the theories advanced, including that of Baron Heiss, and says he has come to the conclusion that the Iron Mask was, without doubt, a brother and an elder brother of

Louis XIV, by a lover of the queen. Anne of Austria had come to persuade herself that hers alone was the fault which had deprived Louis XIV of an heir, but the birth of the Iron Mask undeceived her. The cardinal, to whom she confided her secret, cleverly arranged to bring the king and queen, who had long lived apart, together again. A second son was the result of this reconciliation; and the first child being removed in secret, Louis XIV remained in ignorance of the existence of his half-brother till after his majority. It was the policy of Louis XIV to affect a great respect for the royal house, so he avoided much embarrassment to himself and a scandal affecting the memory of Anne of Austria by adopting the *wise and just* measure of burying alive the pledge of an adulterous love. He was thus enabled to avoid committing an act of cruelty, which *a sovereign less conscientious and less magnanimous* would have considered *a necessity*.

After this declaration Voltaire made no further reference to the Iron Mask. This last version of the story upset that of Sainte-Foix. Voltaire having been initiated into the state secret by the Marquis de Richelieu, we may be permitted to suspect that being naturally indiscreet he published the truth from behind the shelter of a pseudonym, or at least gave a version which approached the truth, but later on realising the dangerous signifi-

cance of his words, he preserved for the future complete silence.

We now approach the question whether the prince who thus became the Iron Mask was an illegitimate brother or a twin-brother of Louis XIV. The first was maintained by M. Quentin-Crawfurd; the second by Abbé Soulavie in his *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu* (London, 1790). In 1783 the Marquis de Luchet, in the *Journal des Gens du Monde* (vol. iv. No. 23, p. 282, *et seq.*), awarded to Buckingham the honour of the paternity in dispute. In support of this, he quoted the testimony of a lady of the house of Saint-Quentin who had been a mistress of the minister Barbézieux, and who died at Chartres about the middle of the eighteenth century. She had declared publicly that Louis XIV had consigned his elder brother to perpetual imprisonment, and that the mask was necessitated by the close resemblance of the two brothers to each other.

The Duke of Buckingham, who came to France in 1625, in order to escort Henrietta Maria, sister of Louis XIII, to England, where she was to marry the Prince of Wales, made no secret of his ardent love for the queen, and it is almost certain that she was not insensible to his passion. An anonymous pamphlet, *La Conférence du Cardinal Mazarin avec le Gazetier* (Brussels, 1649), says that she was in-

fatuated about him, and allowed him to visit her in her room. She even permitted him to take off and keep one of her gloves, and his vanity leading him to show his spoil, the king heard of it, and was vastly offended. An anecdote, the truth of which no one has ever denied, relates that one day Buckingham spoke to the queen with such passion in the presence of her lady-in-waiting, the Marquise de Senecey, that the latter exclaimed, "Be silent, sir, you cannot speak thus to the Queen of France!" According to this version, the Man in the Iron Mask must have been born at latest in 1637, but the mention of any such date would destroy the possibility of Buckingham's paternity, for he was assassinated at Portsmouth on September 2nd, 1628.

After the taking of the Bastille the masked prisoner became the fashionable topic of discussion, and one heard of nothing else. On the 13th of August 1789 it was announced in an article in a journal called *Loisirs d'un Patriote français,* which was afterwards published anonymously as a pamphlet, that the publisher had seen, among other documents found in the Bastille, a card bearing the unintelligible number "64389000," and the following note: "Fouquet, arriving from Les Îles Sainte-Marguerite in an iron mask." To this there was, it was said, a double signature, viz. "XXX," super-

imposed on the name "Kersadion." The journalist was of opinion that Fouquet had succeeded in making his escape, but had been retaken and condemned to pass for dead, and to wear a mask henceforward, as a punishment for his attempted evasion. This tale made some impression, for it was remembered that in the Supplement to the *Siècle de Louis XIV* it was stated that Chamillart had said that "the Iron Mask was a man who knew all the secrets of M. Fouquet." But the existence of this card was never proved, and we cannot accept the story on the unsupported word of an anonymous writer.

From the time that restrictions on the press were removed, hardly a day passed without the appearance of some new pamphlet on the Iron Mask. Louis Dutens, in *Correspondence interceptée* (12mo, 1789), revived the theory of Baron Heiss, supporting it by new and curious facts. He proved that Louis XIV had really ordered one of the Duke of Mantua's ministers to be carried off and imprisoned in Pignerol. Dutens gave the name of the victim as Girolamo Magni. He also quoted from a memorandum which by the wish of the Marquis de Castellane was drawn up by a certain Souchon, probably the man whom Papon questioned in 1778. This Souchon was the son of a man who had belonged to the Free Company maintained in the islands in the time of Saint-Mars, and was seventy-

nine years old. This memorandum gives a detailed account of the abduction of a minister in 1679, who is styled a "minister of the Empire," and his arrival as a masked prisoner at the islands, and states that he died there in captivity nine years after he was carried off.

Dutens thus divests the episode of the element of the marvellous with which Voltaire had surrounded it. He called to his aid the testimony of the Duc de Choiseul, who, having in vain attempted to worm the secret of the Iron Mask out of Louis XV, begged Madame de Pompadour to try her hand, and was told by her that the prisoner was the *minister of an Italian prince*. At the same time that Dutens wrote, "There is no fact in history better established than the fact that the Man in the Iron Mask was a minister of the Duke of Mantua who was carried off from Turin," M. Quentin-Crawfurd was maintaining that the prisoner was a son of Anne of Austria; while a few years earlier Bouche, a lawyer, in his *Essai sur l'Histoire de Provence* (2 vols. 4to, 1785), had regarded this story as a fable invented by Voltaire, and had convinced himself that the prisoner was *a woman*. As we see, discussion threw no light on the subject, and instead of being dissipated, the confusion became ever "worse confounded."

In 1790 the *Mémoires du Maréchal de Richelieu*

appeared. He had left his note-books, his library, and his correspondence to Soulavie. The *Mémoires* are undoubtedly authentic, and have, if not certainty, at least a strong moral presumption in their favour, and gained the belief of men holding diverse opinions. But before placing under the eyes of our readers extracts from them relating to the Iron Mask, let us refresh our memory by recalling two theories which had not stood the test of thorough investigation.

According to some MS. notes left by M. de Bonac, French ambassador at Constantinople in 1724, the Armenian Patriarch Arwedicks, a mortal enemy of our Church and the instigator of the terrible persecutions to which the Roman Catholics were subjected, was carried off into exile at the request of the Jesuits by a French vessel, and *confined in a prison whence there was no escape*. This prison was the fortress of Sainte-Marguerite, and *from there he was taken to the Bastille, where he died*. The Turkish Government continually clamoured for his release till 1723, but the French Government persistently denied having taken any part in the abduction.

Even if it were not a matter of history that Arwedicks went over to the Roman Catholic Church and died a free man in Paris, as may be seen by an inspection of the certificate of his death pre-

served among the archives in the Foreign Office, one sentence from the note-book of M. de Bonac would be sufficient to annihilate this theory. M. de Bonac says that the Patriarch was carried off, while M. de Feriol, who succeeded M. de Châteauneuf in 1699, was ambassador at Constantinople. Now it was in 1698 that Saint-Mars arrived at the Bastille with his masked prisoner.

Several English scholars have sided with Gibbon in thinking that the Man in the Iron Mask might possibly have been Henry, the second son of Oliver Cromwell, who was held as a hostage by Louis XIV.

By an odd coincidence the second son of the Lord Protector does entirely disappear from the page of history in 1659; we know nothing of where he afterwards lived nor when he died. But why should he be a prisoner of state in France, while his elder brother Richard was permitted to live there quite openly? In the absence of all proof, we cannot attach the least importance to this explanation of the mystery.

We now come to the promised extracts from the *Mémoires du Maréchal de Richelieu*:—

"Under the late king there was a time when every class of society was asking who the famous personage really was who went by the name of the Iron Mask, but I noticed that this curiosity abated

somewhat after his arrival at the Bastille with Saint-Mars, when it began to be reported that orders had been given to kill him should he let his name be known. Saint-Mars also let it be understood that whoever found out the secret would share the same fate. This threat to murder both the prisoner and those who showed too much curiosity about him made such an impression, that during the lifetime of the late king people only spoke of the mystery below their breath. The anonymous author of *Les Mémoires de Perse,* which were published in Holland fifteen years after the death of Louis XIV, was the first who dared to speak publicly of the prisoner and relate some anecdotes about him.

"Since the publication of that work, liberty of speech and the freedom of the press have made great strides, and the shade of Louis XIV having lost its terrors, the case of the Iron Mask is freely discussed, and yet even now, at the end of my life and seventy years after the death of the king, people are still asking who the Man in the Iron Mask really was.

"This question was one I put to the adorable princess, beloved of the regent, who inspired in return only aversion and respect, all her love being given to me. As everyone was persuaded that the regent knew the name, the course of life, and the

cause of the imprisonment of the masked prisoner, I, being more venturesome in my curiosity than others, tried through my princess to fathom the secret. She had hitherto constantly repulsed the advances of the Duc d' Orléans, but as the ardour of his passion was thereby in no wise abated, the least glimpse of hope would be sufficient to induce him to grant her everything she asked; I persuaded her, therefore, to let him understand that if he would allow her to read the *Mémoires du Masque* which were in his possession his dearest desires would be fulfilled.

"The Duc d'Orléans had never been known to reveal any secret of state, being unspeakably circumspect, and having been trained to keep every confidence inviolable by his preceptor Dubois, so I felt quite certain that even the princess would fail in her efforts to get a sight of the memoranda in his possession relative to the birth and rank of the masked prisoner; but what cannot love, and such an ardent love, induce a man to do?

. . . . . .

"To reward her goodness the regent gave the documents into her hands, and she forwarded them to me next day, enclosed in a note written in cipher, which, according to the laws of historical writing, I reproduce in its entirety, vouching for its authenticity; for the princess always employed a cipher

when she used the language of gallantry, and this note told me what treaty she had had to sign in order that she might obtain the documents, and the duke the desire of his heart. The details are not admissible in serious history, but, borrowing the modest language of the patriarchal time, I may say that if Jacob, before he obtained possession of the best beloved of Laban's daughters, was obliged to pay the price twice over, the regent drove a better bargain than the patriarch. The note and the memorandum were as follows:—

"'2. 1. 17. 12. 9. 2. 20. 2. 1. 7. 14. 20. 10. 3. 21. 1. 11. 14. 1. 15. 16. 12. 17. 14. 2. 1. 21. 11. 20. 17. 12. 9. 14. 9. 2. 8. 20. 5. 20. 2. 2. 17. 8. 1. 2. 20. 9. 21. 21. 1. 5. 12. 17. 15. 00. 14. 1. 15. 14. 12. 9. 21. 5. 12. 9. 21. 16. 20. 14. 8. 3.

"'NARRATIVE OF THE BIRTH AND EDUCATION OF THE UNFORTUNATE PRINCE WHO WAS SEPARATED FROM THE WORLD BY CARDINALS RICHELIEU AND MAZARIN AND IMPRISONED BY ORDER OF LOUIS XIV.

"'*Drawn up by the Governor of this Prince on his deathbed.*

"'The unfortunate prince whom I brought up and had in charge till almost the end of my life was born on the 5th September 1638 at 8.30 o'clock in the evening, while the king was at supper. His brother, who is now on the throne, was born at noon while the king was at dinner, but whereas his birth was splendid and public, that of his brother was sad and secret; for the king being informed by the midwife that the queen was about to give birth to a second child, ordered the chancellor, the midwife, the chief almoner, the queen's confessor, and myself to stay in her room to be witnesses of whatever happened, and of his course of action should a second child be born.

"'For a long time already it had been foretold to the king that his wife would give birth to two sons, and some days before, certain shepherds had arrived in Paris, saying they were divinely inspired, so that it was said in Paris that if two dauphins were born it would be the greatest misfortune which could happen to the State. The Archbishop of Paris summoned these soothsayers before him, and ordered them to be imprisoned in Saint-Lazare, because the populace was becoming excited about them—a circumstance which filled the king with care, as he foresaw much trouble to his kingdom. What had been predicted by the soothsayers happened, whether they had really been warned by the

constellations, or whether Providence by whom His Majesty had been warned of the calamities which might happen to France interposed. The king had sent a messenger to the cardinal to tell him of this prophecy, and the cardinal had replied that the matter must be considered, that the birth of two dauphins was not impossible, and should such a case arrive, the second must be carefully hidden away, lest in the future desiring to be king he should fight against his brother in support of a new branch of the royal house, and come at last to reign.

"'The king in his suspense felt very uncomfortable, and as the queen began to utter cries we feared a second confinement. We sent to inform the king, who was almost overcome by the thought that he was about to become the father of two dauphins. He said to the Bishop of Meaux, whom he had sent for to minister to the queen, "Do not quit my wife till she is safe; I am in mortal terror." Immediately after he summoned us all, the Bishop of Meaux, the chancellor M. Honorat, Dame Peronète the midwife, and myself, and said to us in presence of the queen, so that she could hear, that we would answer to him with our heads if we made known the birth of a second dauphin; that it was his will that the fact should remain a state secret, to prevent the misfortunes which would else happen, the Salic Law not having declared to

whom the inheritance of the kingdom should come in case two eldest sons were born to any of the kings.

" 'What had been foretold happened: the queen, while the king was at supper, gave birth to a second dauphin, more dainty and more beautiful than the first, but who wept and wailed unceasingly, as if he regretted to take up that life in which he was afterwards to endure such suffering. The chancellor drew up the report of this wonderful birth, without parallel in our history; but His Majesty not being pleased with its form, burned it in our presence, and the chancellor had to write and rewrite till His Majesty was satisfied. The almoner remonstrated, saying it would be impossible to hide the birth of a prince, but the king returned that he had reasons of state for all he did.

" 'Afterwards the king made us register our oath, the chancellor signing it first, then the queen's confessor, and I last. The oath was also signed by the surgeon and midwife who attended on the queen, and the king attached this document to the report, taking both away with him, and I never heard any more of either. I remember that His Majesty consulted with the chancellor as to the form of the oath, and that he spoke for a long time in an undertone to the cardinal: after which the last-born child was given into the charge of the

midwife, and as they were always afraid she would babble about his birth, she has told me that they often threatened her with death should she ever mention it: we were also forbidden to speak, even to each other, of the child whose birth we had witnessed.

"'Not one of us has as yet violated his oath; for His Majesty dreaded nothing so much as a civil war brought about by the two children born together, and the cardinal, who afterwards got the care of the second child into his hands, kept that fear alive. The king also commanded us to examine the unfortunate prince minutely; he had a wart above the left elbow, a mole on the right side of his neck, and a tiny wart on his right thigh; for His Majesty was determined, and rightly so, that in case of the decease of the first-born, the royal infant whom he was entrusting to our care should take his place; wherefore he required our sign-manual to the report of the birth, to which a small royal seal was attached in our presence, and we all signed it after His Majesty, according as he commanded. As to the shepherds who had foretold the double birth, never did I hear another word of them, but neither did I inquire. The cardinal who took the mysterious infant in charge probably got them out of the country.

"'All through the infancy of the second prince

Dame Peronète treated him as if he were her own child, giving out that his father was a great nobleman; for everyone saw by the care she lavished on him and the expense she went to, that although unacknowledged he was the cherished son of rich parents, and well cared for.

"'When the prince began to grow up, Cardinal Mazarin, who succeeded Cardinal Richelieu in the charge of the prince's education, gave him into my hands to bring up in a manner worthy of a king's son, but in secret. Dame Peronète continued in his service till her death, and was very much attached to him, and he still more to her. The prince was instructed in my house in Burgundy, with all the care due to the son and brother of a king.

"'I had several conversations with the queen mother during the troubles in France, and Her Majesty always seemed to fear that if the existence of the prince should be discovered during the lifetime of his brother, the young king, malcontents would make it a pretext for rebellion, because many medical men hold that the last-born of twins is in reality the elder, and if so, he was king by right, while many others have a different opinion.

"'In spite of this dread, the queen could never bring herself to destroy the written evidence of his birth, because in case of the death of the young king she intended to have his twin-brother proclaimed.

She told me often that the written proofs were in her strong box.

" 'I gave the ill-starred prince such an education as I should have liked to receive myself, and no acknowledged son of a king ever had a better. The only thing for which I have to reproach myself is that, without intending it, I caused him great unhappiness; for when he was nineteen years old he had a burning desire to know who he was, and as he saw that I was determined to be silent, growing more firm the more he tormented me with questions, he made up his mind henceforward to disguise his curiosity and to make me think that he believed himself a love-child of my own. He began to call me 'father,' although when we were alone I often assured him that he was mistaken; but at length I gave up combating this belief, which he perhaps only feigned to make me speak, and allowed him to think he was my son, contradicting him no more; but while he continued to dwell on this subject he was meantime making every effort to find out who he really was. Two years passed thus, when, through an unfortunate piece of forgetfulness on my part, for which I greatly blame myself, he became acquainted with the truth. He knew that the king had lately sent me several messengers, and once having carelessly forgotten to lock up a casket containing letters from the queen and the cardinals,

he read part and divined the rest through his natural intelligence; and later confessed to me that he had carried off the letter which told most explicitly of his birth.

" 'I can recall that from this time on, his manner to me showed no longer that respect for me in which I had brought him up, but became hectoring and rude, and that I could not imagine the reason of the change, for I never found out that he had searched my papers, and he never revealed to me how he got at the casket, whether he was aided by some workmen whom he did not wish to betray, or had employed other means.

" 'One day, however, he unguardedly asked me to show him the portraits of the late and the present king. I answered that those that existed were so poor that I was waiting till better ones were taken before having them in my house.

" 'This answer, which did not satisfy him, called forth the request to be allowed to go to Dijon. I found out afterwards that he wanted to see a portrait of the king which was there, and to get to the court, which was just then at Saint-Jean-de-Luz, because of the approaching marriage with the infanta; so that he might compare himself with his brother and see if there were any resemblance between them. Having knowledge of his plan, I never let him out of my sight.

" 'The young prince was at this time as beautiful as Cupid, and through the intervention of Cupid himself he succeeded in getting hold of a portrait of his brother. One of the upper servants of the house, a young girl, had taken his fancy, and he lavished such caresses on her and inspired her with so much love, that although the whole household was strictly forbidden to give him anything without my permission, she procured him a portrait of the king. The unhappy prince saw the likeness at once, indeed no one could help seeing it, for the one portrait would serve equally well for either brother, and the sight produced such a fit of fury that he came to me crying out, " There is my brother, and this tells me who I am! " holding out a letter from Cardinal Mazarin which he had stolen from me, and making a great commotion in my house.

" 'The dread lest the prince should escape and succeed in appearing at the marriage of his brother made me so uneasy, that I sent off a messenger to the king to tell him that my casket had been opened, and asking for instructions. The king sent back word through the cardinal that we were both to be shut up till further orders, and that the prince was to be made to understand that the cause of our common misfortune was his absurd claim. I have since shared his prison, but I believe that a decree of release has arrived from my heavenly Judge, and

for my soul's health and for my ward's sake I make this declaration, that he may know what measures to take in order to put an end to his ignominious estate should the king die without children. Can any oath imposed under threats oblige one to be silent about such incredible events, which it is nevertheless necessary that posterity should know?' "

Such were the contents of the historical document given by the regent to the princess, and it suggests a crowd of questions. Who was the prince's governor? Was he a Burgundian? Was he simply a landed proprietor, with some property and a country house in Burgundy? How far was his estate from Dijon? He must have been a man of note, for he enjoyed the most intimate confidence at the court of Louis XIII, either by virtue of his office or because he was a favourite of the king, the queen, and Cardinal Richelieu. Can we learn from the list of the nobles of Burgundy what member of their body disappeared from public life along with a young ward whom he had brought up in his own house just after the marriage of Louis XIV? Why did he not attach his signature to the declaration, which appears to be a hundred years old? Did he dictate it when so near death that he had not strength to sign it? How did it find its way out of prison? And so forth.

There is no answer to all these questions, and I, for my part, cannot undertake to affirm that the document is genuine. Abbé Soulavie relates that he one day "pressed the marshal for an answer to some questions on the matter, asking, amongst other things, if it were not true that the prisoner was an elder brother of Louis XIV born without the knowledge of Louis XIII. The marshal appeared very much embarrassed, and although he did not entirely refuse to answer, what he said was not very explanatory. He averred that this important personage was neither the illegitimate brother of Louis XIV, nor the Duke of Monmouth, nor the Comte de Vermandois, nor the Duc de Beaufort, and so on, as so many writers had asserted." He called all their writings mere inventions, but added that almost every one of them had got hold of some true incidents, as for instance the order to kill the prisoner should he make himself known. Finally he acknowledged that he knew the state secret, and used the following words: "All that I can tell you, abbé, is, that when the prisoner died at the beginning of the century, at a very advanced age, he had ceased to be of such importance as when, at the beginning of his reign, Louis XIV shut him up *for weighty reasons of state.*"

The above was written down under the eyes of the marshal, and when Abbé Soulavie entreated him

to say something further which, while not actually revealing the secret, would yet satisfy his questioner's curiosity, the marshal answered, "Read M. de Voltaire's latest writings on the subject, especially his concluding words, and reflect on them."

With the exception of Dulaure, all the critics have treated Soulavie's narrative with the most profound contempt, and we must confess that if it was an invention it was a monstrous one, and that the concoction of the famous note in cipher was abominable. "Such was the great secret; in order to find it out, I had to allow myself 5, 12, 17, 15, 14, 1, three times by 8, 3." But unfortunately for those who would defend the morals of Mademoiselle de Valois, it would be difficult to traduce the character of herself, her lover, and her father, for what one knows of the trio justifies one in believing that the more infamous the conduct imputed to them, the more likely it is to be true. We cannot see the force of the objection that Louvois would not have written in the following terms to Saint-Mars in 1687 about a bastard son of Anne of Austria: "I see no objection to your removing Chevalier de Thézut from the *prison* in which he is confined, and putting your *prisoner* there till the one you are preparing for him is ready to receive him." And we cannot understand those who ask if Saint-Mars, following the example of the minister, would have said of a

prince " Until he is installed in the *prison* which is being prepared for him here, which has a chapel adjoining "? Why should he have expressed himself otherwise? Does it evidence an abatement of consideration to call a prisoner a prisoner, and his prison a prison?

A certain M. de Saint-Mihiel published an 8vo volume in 1791, at Strasbourg and Paris, entitled *Le véritable homme, dit au* MASQUE DE FER, *ouvrage dans lequel on fait connaître, sur preuves incontestables, à qui le célèbre infortuné dut le jour, quand et où il naquit.* The wording of the title will give an idea of the bizarre and barbarous jargon in which the whole book is written. It would be difficult to imagine the vanity and self-satisfaction which inspire this new reader of riddles. If he had found the philosopher's stone, or made a discovery which would transform the world, he could not exhibit more pride and pleasure. All things considered, the " incontestable proofs " of his theory do not decide the question definitely, or place it above all attempts at refutation, any more than does the evidence on which the other theories which preceded and followed his rest. But what he lacks before all other things is the talent for arranging and using his materials. With the most ordinary skill he might have evolved a theory which would have defied criticism at least as successfully as the

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others, and he might have supported it by proofs, which if not incontestable (for no one has produced such), had at least moral presumption in their favour, which has great weight in such a mysterious and obscure affair, in trying to explain, which one can never leave on one side, the respect shown by Louvois to the prisoner, to whom he always spoke standing and with uncovered head.

According to M. de Saint-Mihiel, *the Man in the Iron Mask was a legitimate son of Anne of Austria and Mazarin.*

He avers that Mazarin was only a deacon, and not a priest, when he became cardinal, having never taken priest's orders, according to the testimony of the Princess Palatine, consort of Philip I, Duc d'Orléans, and that it was therefore possible for him to marry, and that he did marry, Anne of Austria in secret.

"Old Madame Beauvais, principal woman of the bed-chamber to the queen mother, knew of this ridiculous marriage, and as the price of her secrecy obliged the queen to comply with all her whims. To this circumstance the principal bed-chamber women owe the extensive privileges accorded them ever since in this country" (Letter of the Duchesse d'Orléans, 13th September 1713).

"The queen mother, consort of Louis XIII, had

done worse than simply to fall in love with Mazarin, she had married him, for he had never been an ordained priest, he had only taken deacon's orders. If he had been a priest his marriage would have been impossible. He grew terribly tired of the good queen mother, and did not live happily with her, which was only what he deserved for making such a marriage" (Letter of the Duchesse d'Orléans, 2nd November 1717).

"She (the queen mother) was quite easy in her conscience about Cardinal Mazarin; he was not in priest's orders, and so could marry. The secret passage by which he reached the queen's rooms every evening still exists in the Palais Royal" (Letter of the Duchesse d'Orléans, 2nd July 1719).

"The queen's manner of conducting affairs is influenced by the passion which dominates her. When she and the cardinal converse together, their ardent love for each other is betrayed by their looks and gestures; it is plain to see that when obliged to part for a time they do it with great reluctance. If what people say is true, that they are properly married, and that their union has been blessed by Père Vincent the missioner, there is no harm in all that goes on between them, either in public or in private" (*Requête civile contre la Conclusion de la Paix*, 1649).

The Man in the Iron Mask told the apothecary in the Bastille that he thought he was about sixty years of age (*Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*). Thus he must have been born in 1644, just at the time when Anne of Austria was invested with the royal power, though it was really exercised by Mazarin.

Can we find any incident recorded in history which lends support to the supposition that Anne of Austria had a son whose birth was kept as secret as her marriage to Mazarin?

"In 1644, Anne of Austria being dissatisfied with her apartments in the Louvre, moved to the Palais Royal, which had been left to the king by Richelieu. Shortly after taking up residence there she was very ill with a severe attack of jaundice, which was caused, in the opinion of the doctors, by worry, anxiety, and overwork, and which pulled her down greatly" (*Mémoire de Madame de Motteville*, 4 vols. 12mo, vol. i. p. 194).

"This anxiety, caused by the pressure of public business, was most probably only dwelt on as a pretext for a pretended attack of illness. Anne of Austria had no cause for worry and anxiety till 1649. She did not begin to complain of the despotism of Mazarin till towards the end of 1645" (*Ibid.*, vol. i. pp. 272, 273).

"She went frequently to the theatre during her first year of widowhood, but took care to hide her-

self from view in her box" (*Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 342).

Abbé Soulavie, in vol. vi. of the *Mémoires de Richelieu*, published in 1793, controverted the opinions of M. de Saint-Mihiel, and again advanced those which he had published some time before, supporting them by a new array of reasons.

The fruitlessness of research in the archives of the Bastille, and the importance of the political events which were happening, diverted the attention of the public for some years from this subject. In the year 1800, however, the *Magazin encyclopédique* published (vol. vi. p. 472) an article entitled *Mémoires sur les Problèmes historiques, et la Méthode de les résoudre appliquée â celui qui concerne l'Homme au Masque de Fer*, signed C. D. O., in which the author maintained that the prisoner was the first minister of the Duke of Mantua, and says his name was Girolamo Magni.

In the same year an octavo volume of 142 pages was produced by M. Roux-Fazillac. It bore the title *Recherches historiques et critiques sur l'Homme au Masque de Fer, d'où résultent des Notions certaines sur ce prisonnier.* These researches brought to light a secret correspondence relative to certain negotiations and intrigues, and to the abduction of a secretary of the Duke of Mantua whose name was Matthioli, and not Girolamo Magni.

In 1802 an octavo pamphlet containing 11 pages, of which the author was perhaps Baron Lervière, but which was signed Reth, was published. It took the form of a letter to General Jourdan, and was dated from Turin, and gave many details about Matthioli and his family. It was entitled *Véritable Clef de l'Histoire de l'Homme au Masque de Fer.* It proved that the secretary of the Duke of Mantua was carried off, masked, and imprisoned, by order of Louis XIV in 1679, but it did not succeed in establishing as an undoubted fact that the secretary and the Man in the Iron Mask were one and the same person.

It may be remembered that M. Crawfurd writing in 1798 had said in his *Histoire de la Bastille* (8vo, 474 pages), "I cannot doubt that the Man in the Iron Mask was the son of Anne of Austria, but am unable to decide whether he was a twin-brother of Louis XIV or was born while the king and queen lived apart, or during her widowhood." M. Crawfurd, in his *Mélanges d'Histoire et de Littérature tirés d'un Portefeuille* (quarto 1809, octavo 1817), demolished the theory advanced by Roux-Fazillac.

In 1825, M. Delort discovered in the archives several letters relating to Matthioli, and published his *Histoire de l'Homme au Masque de Fer* (8vo). This work was translated into English by George Agar-Ellis, and retranslated into French in 1830,

under the title *Histoire authentique du Prisonnier d'Etat, connu sous le Nom de Masque de Fer.* It is in this work that the suggestion is made that the captive was the second son of Oliver Cromwell.

In 1826, M. de Taulès wrote that, in his opinion, the masked prisoner was none other than the Armenian Patriarch. But six years later the great success of my drama at the Odéon converted nearly everyone to the version of which Soulavie was the chief exponent. The bibliophile Jacob is mistaken in asserting that I followed a tradition preserved in the family of the Duc de Choiseul; M. le Duc de Bassano sent me a copy made under his personal supervision of a document drawn up for Napoleon, containing the results of some researches made by his orders on the subject of the Man in the Iron Mask. The original MS., as well as that of the *Mémoires du Duc de Richelieu,* were, the duke told me, kept at the Foreign Office. In 1834 the Journal of the *Institut historique* published a letter from M. Auguste Billiard, who stated that he had also made a copy of this document for the late Comte de Montalivet, Home Secretary under the Empire.

M. Dufey (de l'Yonne) gave his *Histoire de la Bastille* to the world in the same year, and was inclined to believe that the prisoner was a son of Buckingham.

Besides the many important personages on whom

the famous mask had been placed, there was one whom everyone had forgotten, although his name had been put forward by the minister Chamillart: this was the celebrated Superintendent of Finance, Nicolas Fouquet. In 1837, Jacob, armed with documents and extracts, once more occupied himself with this Chinese puzzle on which so much ingenuity had been lavished, but of which no one had as yet got all the pieces into their places. Let us see if he succeeded better than his forerunners.

The first feeling he awakes is one of surprise. It seems odd that he should again bring up the case of Fouquet, who was condemned to imprisonment for life in 1664, confined in Pignerol under the care of Saint-Mars, and whose death was announced (falsely according to Jacob) on March 23rd, 1680. The first thing to look for in trying to get at the true history of the Mask is a sufficient reason of state to account for the persistent concealment of the prisoner's features till his death; and next, an explanation of the respect shown him by Louvois, whose attitude towards him would have been extraordinary in any age, but was doubly so during the reign of Louis XIV, whose courtiers would have been the last persons in the world to render homage to the misfortunes of a man in disgrace with their master. Whatever the real motive of the king's anger against Fouquet may have been, whether

Louis thought he arrogated to himself too much power, or aspired to rival his master in the hearts of some of the king's mistresses, or even presumed to raise his eyes higher still, was not the utter ruin, the lifelong captivity, of his enemy enough to satiate the vengeance of the king? What could he desire more? Why should his anger, which seemed slaked in 1664, burst forth into hotter flames seventeen years later, and lead him to inflict a new punishment? According to the bibliophile, the king being wearied by the continual petitions for pardon addressed to him by the superintendent's family, ordered them to be told that he was dead, to rid himself of their supplications. Colbert's hatred, says he, was the immediate cause of Fouquet's fall; but even if this hatred hastened the catastrophe, are we to suppose that it pursued the delinquent beyond the sentence, through the long years of captivity, and, renewing its energy, infected the minds of the king and his councillors? If that were so, how shall we explain the respect shown by Louvois? Colbert would not have stood uncovered before Fouquet in prison. Why should Colbert's colleague have done so?

It must, however, be confessed that of all existing theories, this one, thanks to the unlimited learning and research of the bibliophile, has the greatest number of documents with the various interpreta-

tions thereof, the greatest profusion of dates, on its side.

For it is certain—

1st, that the precautions taken when Fouquet was sent to Pignerol resembled in every respect those employed later by the custodians of the Iron Mask, both at the Îles Sainte-Marguerite and at the Bastille;

2nd, that the majority of the traditions relative to the masked prisoner might apply to Fouquet;

3rd, that the Iron Mask was first heard of immediately after the announcement of the death of Fouquet in 1680;

4th, that there exists no irrefragable proof that Fouquet's death really occurred in the above year.

The decree of the Court of Justice, dated 20th December 1664, banished Fouquet from the kingdom for life. "But the king was of the opinion that it would be dangerous to let the said Fouquet leave the country, in consideration of his intimate knowledge of the most important matters of state. Consequently the sentence of perpetual banishment was *commuted* into that of perpetual imprisonment" (*Recueil des défenses de M. Fouquet*). The instructions signed by the king and remitted to Saint-Mars forbid him to permit Fouquet to hold any

spoken or written communication with anyone whatsoever, or to leave his apartments for any cause, not even for exercise. The great mistrust felt by Louvois pervades all his letters to Saint-Mars. The precautions which he ordered to be kept up were quite as stringent as in the case of the Iron Mask.

The report of the discovery of a shirt covered with writing, by a friar, which Abbé Papon mentions, may perhaps be traced to the following extracts from two letters written by Louvois to Saint-Mars: "Your letter has come to hand with the new handkerchief on which M. Fouquet has written" (18th Dec. 1665); "You can tell him that if he continues to employ his table-linen as note-paper he must not be surprised if you refuse to supply him with any more" (21st Nov. 1667).

Père Papon asserts that a valet who served the masked prisoner died in his master's room. Now the man who waited on Fouquet, and who like him was sentenced to lifelong imprisonment, died in February 1680 (see letter of Louvois to Saint-Mars, 12th March 1680). Echoes of incidents which took place at Pignerol might have reached the Îles Sainte-Marguerite when Saint-Mars transferred his "former prisoner" from one fortress to the other. The fine clothes and linen, the books, all those luxuries in fact that were lavished on the masked prisoner, were not withheld from Fouquet. The

furniture of a second room at Pignerol cost over 1200 livres (see letters of Louvois, 12th Dec. 1665, and 22nd Feb. 1666).

It is also known that until the year 1680 Saint-Mars had only two important prisoners at Pignerol, Fouquet and Lauzun. However, his "former prisoner of Pignerol," according to Du Junca's diary, must have reached the latter fortress before the end of August 1681, when Saint-Mars went to Exilles as governor. So that it was in the interval between the 23rd March 1680, the alleged date of Fouquet's death, and the 1st September 1681, that the Iron Mask appeared at Pignerol, and yet Saint-Mars took only two prisoners to Exilles. One of these was probably the Man in the Iron Mask; the other, who must have been Matthioli, died before the year 1687, for when Saint-Mars took over the governorship in the month of January of that year of the Îles Sainte-Marguerite he brought only *one* prisoner thither with him. "I have taken such good measures to guard my prisoner that I can answer to you for his safety" (Lettres de Saint-Mars à Louvois, 20th January 1687).

In the correspondence of Louvois with Saint-Mars we find, it is true, mention of the death of Fouquet on March 23rd, 1680, but in his later correspondence Louvois never says "the *late* M. Fouquet," but speaks of him, as usual, as "M. Fou-

quet" simply. Most historians have given as a fact that Fouquet was interred in the same vault as his father in the chapel of Saint-François de Sales in the convent church belonging to the Sisters of the Order of the Visitation-Sainte-Marie, founded in the beginning of the seventeenth century by Madame de Chantal. But proof to the contrary exists; for the subterranean portion of St. Francis's chapel was closed in 1786, the last person interred there being Adélaïde Félicité Brulard, with whom ended the house of Sillery. The convent was shut up in 1790, and the church given over to the Protestants in 1802; who continued to respect the tombs. In 1836 the Cathedral chapter of Bourges claimed the remains of one of their archbishops buried there in the time of the Sisters of Sainte-Marie. On this occasion all the coffins were examined and all the inscriptions carefully copied, but the name of Nicolas Fouquet is absent.

Voltaire says in his *Dictionnaire philosophique,* article "Ana," "It is most remarkable that no one knows where the celebrated Fouquet was buried."

But in spite of all these coincidences, this carefully constructed theory was wrecked on the same point on which the theory that the prisoner was either the Duke of Monmouth or the Comte de Vermandois came to grief, viz. a letter from Barbézieux, dated 13th August 1691, in which occur the

words, "THE PRISONER WHOM YOU HAVE HAD IN CHARGE FOR TWENTY YEARS." According to this testimony, which Jacob had successfully used against his predecessors, the prisoner referred to could not have been Fouquet, who completed his twenty-seventh year of captivity in 1691, if still alive.

We have now impartially set before our readers all the opinions which have been held in regard to the solution of this formidable enigma. For ourselves, we hold the belief that the Man in the Iron Mask stood on the steps of the throne. Although the mystery cannot be said to be definitely cleared up, one thing stands out firmly established among the mass of conjecture we have collected together, and that is, that wherever the prisoner appeared he was ordered *to wear a mask* on pain of death. His features, therefore, might during half a century have brought about his recognition from one end of France to the other; consequently, during the same space of time there existed in France a face resembling the prisoner's known through all her provinces, even to her most secluded isle.

Whose face could this be, if not that of Louis XIV, twin-brother of the Man in the Iron Mask?

To nullify this simple and natural conclusion strong evidence will be required.

Our task has been limited to that of an examining

judge at a trial, and we feel sure that our readers will not be sorry that we have left them to choose amid all the conflicting explanations of the puzzle. No consistent narrative that we might have concocted would, it seems to us, have been half as interesting to them as to allow them to follow the devious paths opened up by those who entered on the search for the heart of the mystery. Everything connected with the masked prisoner arouses the most vivid curiosity. And what end had we in view? Was it not to denounce a crime and to brand the perpetrator thereof? The facts as they stand are sufficient for our object, and speak more eloquently than if used to adorn a tale or to prove an ingenious theory.

MARTIN GUERRE

# MARTIN GUERRE

WE are sometimes astonished at the striking resemblance existing between two persons who are absolute strangers to each other, but in fact it is the opposite which ought to surprise us. Indeed, why should we not rather admire a Creative Power so infinite in its variety that it never ceases to produce entirely different combinations with precisely the same elements? The more one considers this prodigious versatility of form, the more overwhelming it appears.

To begin with, each nation has its own distinct and characteristic type, separating it from other races of men. Thus there are the English, Spanish, German, or Slavonic types; again, in each nation we find families distinguished from each other by less general but still well-pronounced features; and lastly, the individuals of each family, differing again in more or less marked gradations. What a multitude of physiognomies! What variety of impression from the innumerable stamps of the human countenance! What millions of models and no copies! Considering this ever changing spectacle,

which ought to inspire us with most astonishment —the perpetual difference of faces or the accidental resemblance of a few individuals? Is it impossible that in the whole wide world there should be found by chance two people whose features are cast in one and the same mould? Certainly not; therefore that which ought to surprise us is not that these duplicates exist here and there upon the earth, but that they are to be met with in the same place, and appear together before our eyes, little accustomed to see such resemblances. From Amphitryon down to our own days, many fables have owed their origin to this fact, and history also has provided a few examples, such as the false Demetrius in Russia, the English Perkin Warbeck, and several other celebrated impostors, whilst the story we now present to our readers is no less curious and strange.

On the 10th of August 1557, an inauspicious day in the history of France, the roar of cannon was still heard at six in the evening in the plains of St. Quentin; where the French army had just been destroyed by the united troops of England and Spain, commanded by the famous Captain Emanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy. An utterly beaten infantry, the Constable Montmorency and several generals taken prisoner, the Duke d'Enghien mortally wounded, the flower of the nobility cut down like grass,—such were the terrible results of a bat-

tle which plunged France into mourning, and which would have been a blot on the reign of Henry II, had not the Duke of Guise obtained a brilliant revenge the following year.

In a little village less than a mile from the field of battle were to be heard the groans of the wounded and dying, who had been carried thither from the field of battle. The inhabitants had given up their houses to be used as hospitals, and two or three barber surgeons went hither and thither, hastily ordering operations which they left to their assistants, and driving out fugitives who had contrived to accompany the wounded under pretence of assisting friends or near relations. They had already expelled a good number of these poor fellows, when, opening the door of a small room, they found a soldier soaked in blood lying on a rough mat, and another soldier aparently attending on him with the utmost care.

"Who are you?" said one of the surgeons to the sufferer. "I don't think you belong to our French troops."

"Help!" cried the soldier, "only help me! and may God bless you for it!"

"From the colour of that tunic," remarked the other surgeon, "I should wager the rascal belongs to some Spanish gentleman. By what blunder was he brought here?"

"For pity's sake!" murmured the poor fellow: "I am in such pain."

"Die, wretch!" responded the last speaker, pushing him with his foot. "Die, like the dog you are!"

But this brutality, answered as it was by an agonised groan, disgusted the other surgeon.

"After all, he is a man, and a wounded man who implores help. Leave him to me, René."

René went out grumbling, and the one who remained proceeded to examine the wound. A terrible arquebus-shot had passed through the leg, shattering the bone: amputation was absolutely necessary.

Before proceeding to the operation, the surgeon turned to the other soldier, who had retired into the darkest corner of the room.

"And you, who may you be?" he asked.

The man replied by coming forward into the light: no other answer was needed. He resembled his companion so closely that no one could doubt they were brothers—twin brothers, probably. Both were above middle height; both had olive-brown complexions, black eyes, hooked noses, pointed chins, a slightly projecting lower lip; both were round-shouldered, though this defect did not amount to disfigurement: the whole personality suggested strength, and was not destitute of mas-

culine beauty. So strong a likeness is hardly ever seen; even their ages appeared to agree, for one would not have supposed either to be more than thirty-two; and the only difference noticeable, besides the pale countenance of the wounded man, was that he was thin as compared with the moderate fleshiness of the other, also that he had a large scar over the right eyebrow.

"Look well after your brother's soul," said the surgeon to the soldier, who remained standing; "if it is in no better case than his body, it is much to be pitied."

"Is there no hope?" inquired the Sosia of the wounded man.

"The wound is too large and too deep," replied the man of science, "to be cauterised with boiling oil, according to the ancient method. 'Delenda est causa mali,' the source of evil must be destroyed, as says the learned Ambrose Paré; I ought therefore 'secareferro,'—that is to say, take off the leg. May God grant that he survive the operation!"

While seeking his instruments, he looked the supposed brother full in the face, and added—

"But how is it that you are carrying muskets in opposing armies, for I see that you belong to us, while this poor fellow wears Spanish uniform?"

"Oh, that would be a long story to tell," replied

the soldier, shaking his head. "As for me, I followed the career which was open to me, and took service of my own free will under the banner of our lord king, Henry II. This man, whom you rightly suppose to be my brother, was born in Biscay, and became attached to the household of the Cardinal of Burgos, and afterwards to the cardinal's brother, whom he was obliged to follow to the war. I recognised him on the battle-field just as he fell; I dragged him out of a heap of dead, and brought him here."

During his recital this individual's features betrayed considerable agitation, but the surgeon did not heed it. Not finding some necessary instruments, "My colleague," he exclaimed, "must have carried them off. He constantly does this, out of jealousy of my reputation; but I will be even with him yet! Such splendid instruments! They will almost work of themselves, and are capable of imparting some skill even to him, dunce as he is! . . . I shall be back in an hour or two; he must rest, sleep, have nothing to excite him, nothing to inflame the wound; and when the operation is well over, we shall see! May the Lord be gracious to him!"

Then he went to the door, leaving the poor wretch to the care of his supposed brother.

"My God!" he added, shaking his head, "if he survive, it will be by the help of a miracle."

Scarcely had he left the room, when the unwounded soldier carefully examined the features of the wounded one.

"Yes," he murmured between his teeth, "they were right in saying that my exact double was to be found in the hostile army. . . . Truly one would not know us apart! . . . I might be surveying myself in a mirror. I did well to look for him in the rear of the Spanish army, and, thanks to the fellow who rolled him over so conveniently with that arquebus-shot, I was able to escape the dangers of the mêlée by carrying him out of it."

"But that's not all," he thought, still carefully studying the tortured face of the unhappy sufferer; "it is not enough to have got out of that. I have absolutely nothing in the world, no home, no resources. Beggar by birth, adventurer by fortune, I have enlisted, and have consumed my pay; I hoped for plunder, and here we are in full flight! What am I to do? Go and drown myself? No, certainly: a cannon-ball would be as good as that. But can't I profit by this chance, and obtain a decent position by turning to my own advantage this curious resemblance, and making some use of this man whom Fate has thrown in my way, and who has but a short time to live?"

Arguing thus, he bent over the prostrate man with a cynical laugh: one might have thought he

was Satan watching the departure of a soul too utterly lost to escape him.

"Alas! alas!" cried the sufferer; "may God have mercy on me! I feel my end is near."

"Bah! comrade, drive away these dismal thoughts. Your leg pains you—well, they will cut it off! Think only of the other one, and trust in Providence!"

"Water, a drop of water, for Heaven's sake!" The sufferer was in a high fever. The would-be nurse looked round and saw a jug of water, towards which the dying man extended a trembling hand. A truly infernal idea entered his mind. He poured some water into a gourd which hung from his belt, held it to the lips of the wounded man, and then withdrew it.

"Oh! I thirst—that water! . . . For pity's sake, give me some!"

"Yes, but on one condition—you must tell me your whole history."

"Yes . . . but give me water!"

His tormentor allowed him to swallow a mouthful, then overwhelmed him with questions as to his family, his friends and fortune, and compelled him to answer by keeping before his eyes the water which alone could relieve the fever which devoured him. After this often interrupted interrogation, the sufferer sank back exhausted, and almost insen-

sible. But, not yet satisfied, his companion conceived the idea of reviving him with a few drops of brandy, which quickly brought back the fever, and excited his brain sufficiently to enable him to answer fresh questions. The doses of spirit were doubled several times, at the risk of ending the unhappy man's days then and there. Almost delirious, his head feeling as if on fire, his sufferings gave way to a feverish excitement, which took him back to other places and other times: he began to recall the days of his youth and the country where he lived. But his tongue was still fettered by a kind of reserve: his secret thoughts, the private details of his past life were not yet told, and it seemed as though he might die at any moment. Time was passing, night already coming on, and it occurred to the merciless questioner to profit by the gathering darkness. By a few solemn words he aroused the religious feelings of the sufferer, terrified him by speaking of the punishments of another life and the flames of hell, until to the delirious fancy of the sick man he took the form of a judge who could either deliver him to eternal damnation or open the gates of heaven to him. At length, overwhelmed by a voice which resounded in his ear like that of a minister of God, the dying man laid bare his inmost soul before his tormentor, and made his last confession to him.

Yet a few moments, and the executioner—he deserves no other name—hangs over his victim, opens his tunic, seizes some papers and a few coins, half draws his dagger, but thinks better of it; then, contemptuously spurning the victim, as the other surgeon had done—

"I might kill you," he says, "but it would be a useless murder; it would only be hastening your last sigh by an hour or two, and advancing my claims to your inheritance by the same space of time."

And he adds mockingly—

"Farewell, my brother!"

The wounded soldier utters a feeble groan; the adventurer leaves the room.

. . . . . .

Four months later, a woman sat at the door of a house at one end of the village of Artigues, near Rieux, and played with a child about nine or ten years of age. Still young, she had the brown complexion of Southern women, and her beautiful black hair fell in curls about her face. Her flashing eyes occasionally betrayed hidden passions, concealed, however, beneath an apparent indifference and lassitude, and her wasted form seemed to acknowledge the existence of some secret grief. An observer would have divined a shattered life, a withered happiness, a soul grievously wounded.

Her dress was that of a wealthy peasant; and

she wore one of the long gowns with hanging sleeves which were in fashion in the sixteenth century. The house in front of which she sat belonged to her, so also the immense field which adjoined the garden. Her attention was divided between the play of her son and the orders she was giving to an old servant, when an exclamation from the child startled her.

"Mother!" he cried, "mother, there he is!" She looked where the child pointed, and saw a young boy turning the corner of the street.

"Yes," continued the child, "that is the lad who, when I was playing with the other boys yesterday, called me all sorts of bad names."

"What sort of names, my child?"

"There was one I did not understand, but it must have been a very bad one, for the other boys all pointed at me, and left me alone. He called me—and he said it was only what his mother had told him—he called me a wicked bastard!"

His mother's face became purple with indignation. "What!" she cried, "they dared! . . . What an insult!"

"What does this bad word mean, mother?" asked the child, half frightened by her anger. "Is that what they call poor children who have no father?"

His mother folded him in her arms. "Oh!" she

continued, "it is an infamous slander! These people never saw your father, they have only been here six years, and this is the eighth since he went away, but this is abominable! We were married in that church, we came at once to live in this house, which was my marriage portion, and my poor Martin has relations and friends here who will not allow his wife to be insulted——"

"Say rather, his widow," interrupted a solemn voice.

"Ah! uncle!" exclaimed the woman, turning towards an old man who had just emerged from the house.

"Yes, Bertrande," continued the new-comer, "you must get reconciled to the idea that my nephew has ceased to exist. I am sure he was not such a fool as to have remained all this time without letting us hear from him. He was not the fellow to go off at a tangent, on account of a domestic quarrel which you have never vouchsafed to explain to me, and to retain his anger during all these eight years! Where did he go? What did he do? We none of us know, neither you nor I, nor anybody else. He is assuredly dead, and lies in some graveyard far enough from here. May God have mercy on his soul!"

Bertrande, weeping, made the sign of the cross, and bowed her head upon her hands.

"Good-bye, Sanxi," said the uncle, tapping the child's cheek. Sanxi turned sulkily away.

There was certainly nothing specially attractive about the uncle: he belonged to a type which children instinctively dislike, false, crafty, with squinting eyes which continually appeared to contradict his honeyed tongue.

"Bertrande," he said, "your boy is like his father before him, and only answers my kindness with rudeness."

"Forgive him," answered the mother; "he is very young, and does not understand the respect due to his father's uncle. I will teach him better things; he will soon learn that he ought to be grateful for the care you have taken of his little property."

"No doubt, no doubt," said the uncle, trying hard to smile. "I will give you a good account of it, for I shall only have to reckon with you two in future. Come, my dear, believe me, your husband is really dead, and you have sorrowed quite enough for a good-for-nothing fellow. Think no more of him."

So saying, he departed, leaving the poor young woman a prey to the saddest thoughts.

Bertrande de Rolls, naturally gifted with extreme sensibility, on which a careful education had imposed due restraint, had barely completed her

twelfth year when she was married to Martin Guerre, a boy of about the same age, such precocious unions being then not uncommon, especially in the Southern provinces. They were generally settled by considerations of family interest, assisted by the extremely early development habitual to the climate. The young couple lived for a long time as brother and sister, and Bertrande, thus early familiar with the idea of domestic happiness, bestowed her whole affection on the youth whom she had been taught to regard as her life's companion. He was the Alpha and Omega of her existence; all her love, all her thoughts, were given to him, and when their marriage was at length completed, the birth of a son seemed only another link in the already long existing bond of union. But, as many wise men have remarked, a uniform happiness, which only attaches women more and more, has often upon men a precisely contrary effect, and so it was with Martin Guerre. Of a lively and excitable temperament, he wearied of a yoke which had been imposed so early, and, anxious to see the world and enjoy some freedom, he one day took advantage of a domestic difference, in which Bertrande owned herself to have been wrong, and left his house and family. He was sought and awaited in vain. Bertrande spent the first month in vainly expecting his return, then she betook herself to

prayer; but Heaven appeared deaf to her supplications, the truant returned not. She wished to go in search of him, but the world is wide, and no single trace remained to guide her. What torture for a tender heart! What suffering for a soul thirsting for love! What sleepless nights! What restless vigils! Years passed thus; her son was growing up, yet not a word reached her from the man she loved so much. She spoke often of him to the uncomprehending child, she sought to discover his features in those of her boy, but though she endeavoured to concentrate her whole affection on her son, she realised that there is suffering which maternal love cannot console, and tears which it cannot dry. Consumed by the strength of the sorrow which ever dwelt in her heart, the poor woman was slowly wasting, worn out by the regrets of the past, the vain desires of the present, and the dreary prospect of the future. And now she had been openly insulted, her feelings as a mother wounded to the quick; and her husband's uncle, instead of defending and consoling her, could give only cold counsel and unsympathetic words!

Pierre Guerre, indeed, was simply a thorough egotist. In his youth he had been charged with usury; no one knew by what means he had become rich, for the little drapery trade which he called his profession did not appear to be very profitable.

After his nephew's departure it seemed only natural that he should pose as the family guardian, and he applied himself to the task of increasing the little income, but without considering himself bound to give any account to Bertrande. So, once persuaded that Martin was no more, he was apparently not unwilling to prolong a situation so much to his own advantage.

Night was fast coming on; in the dim twilight distant objects became confused and indistinct. It was the end of autumn, that melancholy season which suggests so many gloomy thoughts and recalls so many blighted hopes. The child had gone into the house. Bertrande, still sitting at the door, resting her forehead on her hand, thought sadly of her uncle's words; recalling in imagination the past scenes which they suggested, the time of their childhood, when, married so young, they were as yet only playmates, prefacing the graver duties of life by innocent pleasures; then of the love which grew with their increasing age; then of how this love became altered, changing on her side into passion, on his into indifference. She tried to recollect him as he had been on the eve of his departure, young and handsome, carrying his head high, coming home from a fatiguing hunt and sitting by his son's cradle; and then also she remembered bitterly the jealous suspicions she had conceived, the anger with

which she had allowed them to escape her, the consequent quarrel, followed by the disappearance of her offended husband, and the eight succeeding years of solitude and mourning. She wept over his desertion, over the desolation of her life, seeing around her only indifferent or selfish people, and caring only to live for her child's sake, who gave her at least a shadowy reflection of the husband she had lost. "Lost—yes, lost for ever!" she said to herself, sighing, and looking again at the fields whence she had so often seen him coming at this same twilight hour, returning to his home for the evening meal. She cast a wandering eye on the distant hills, which showed a black outline against a yet fiery western sky, then let it fall on a little grove of olive trees planted on the farther side of the brook which skirted her dwelling. Everything was calm; approaching night brought silence along with darkness: it was exactly what she saw every evening, but to leave which required always an effort.

She rose to re-enter the house, when her attention was caught by a movement amongst the trees. For a moment she thought she was mistaken, but the branches again rustled, then parted asunder, and the form of a man appeared on the other side of the brook. Terrified, Bertrande tried to scream, but not a sound escaped her lips; her voice seemed

paralyzed by terror, as in an evil dream. And she almost thought it was a dream, for notwithstanding the dark shadows cast around this indistinct semblance, she seemed to recognise features once dear to her. Had her bitter reveries ended by making her the victim of a hallucination? She thought her brain was giving way, and sank on her knees to pray for help. But the figure remained; it stood motionless, with folded arms, silently gazing at her! Then she thought of witchcraft, of evil demons, and superstitious as every one was in those days, she kissed a crucifix which hung from her neck, and fell fainting on the ground. With one spring the phantom crossed the brook and stood beside her.

"Bertrande!" it said in a voice of emotion. She raised her head, uttered a piercing cry, and was clasped in her husband's arms.

The whole village became aware of this event that same evening. The neighbours crowded round Bertrande's door, Martin's friends and relations naturally wishing to see him after this miraculous reappearance, while those who had never known him desired no less to gratify their curiosity; so that the hero of the little drama, instead of remaining quietly at home with his wife, was obliged to exhibit himself publicly in a neighbouring barn. His four sisters burst through the crowd and fell on his neck weeping; his uncle examined him doubt-

fully at first, then extended his arms. Everybody recognised him, beginning with the old servant Marguérite, who had been with the young couple ever since their wedding-day. People observed only that a riper age had strengthened his features, and given more character to his countenance and more development to his powerful figure; also that he had a scar over the right eyebrow, and that he limped slightly. These were the marks of wounds he had received, he said, which now no longer troubled him. He appeared anxious to return to his wife and child, but the crowd insisted on hearing the story of his adventures during his voluntary absence, and he was obliged to satisfy them. Eight years ago, he said, the desire to see more of the world had gained an irresistible mastery over him; he yielded to it, and departed secretly. A natural longing took him to his birthplace in Biscay, where he had seen his surviving relatives. There he met the Cardinal of Burgos, who took him into his service, promising him profit, hard knocks to give and take, and plenty of adventure. Some time after, he left the cardinal's household for that of his brother, who, much against his will, compelled him to follow him to the war and bear arms against the French. Thus he found himself on the Spanish side on the day of St. Quentin, and received a terrible gun-shot wound in the leg. Being carried into a house in an

adjoining village, he fell into the hands of a surgeon, who insisted that the leg must be amputated immediately, but who left him for a moment, and never returned. Then he encountered a good old woman, who dressed his wound and nursed him night and day. So that in a few weeks he recovered, and was able to set out for Artigues, too thankful to return to his house and land still more to his wife and child, and fully resolved never to leave them again.

Having ended his story, he shook hands with his still wondering neighbours, addressing by name some who had been very young when he left, and who, hearing their names, came forward now as grown men, hardly recognisable, but much pleased at being remembered. He returned his sisters' caresses, begged his uncle's forgiveness for the trouble he had given in his boyhood, recalling with mirth the various corrections received. He mentioned also an Augustinian monk who had taught him to read, and another reverend father, a Capuchin, whose irregular conduct had caused much scandal in the neighbourhood. In short, notwithstanding his prolonged absence, he seemed to have a perfect recollection of places, persons, and things. The good people overwhelmed him with congratulations, vying with one another in praising him for having the good sense to come home, and in describing the grief

and the perfect virtue of his Bertrande. Emotion was excited, many wept, and several bottles from Martin Guerre's cellar were emptied. At length the assembly dispersed, uttering many exclamations about the extraordinary chances of Fate, and retired to their own homes, excited, astonished, and gratified, with the one exception of old Pierre Guerre, who had been struck by an unsatisfactory remark made by his nephew, and who dreamed all night about the chances of pecuniary loss augured by the latter's return.

It was midnight before the husband and wife were alone and able to give vent to their feelings. Bertrande still felt half stupefied; she could not believe her own eyes and ears, nor realise that she saw again in her marriage chamber her husband of eight years ago, him for whom she had wept, whose death she had deplored only a few hours previously. In the sudden shock caused by so much joy succeeding so much grief, she had not been able to express what she felt; her confused ideas were difficult to explain, and she seemed deprived of the powers of speech and reflection. When she became calmer and more capable of analysing her feelings, she was astonished not to feel towards her husband the same affection which had moved her so strongly a few hours before. It was certainly himself, those were the same features, that was the man to whom

she had willingly given her hand, her heart, herself, and yet now that she saw him again a cold barrier of shyness, of modesty, seemed to have risen between them. His first kiss, even, had not made her happy: she blushed and felt saddened—a curious result of the long absence! She could not define the changes wrought by years in his appearance: his countenance seemed harsher, yet the lines of his face, his outer man, his whole personality, did not seem altered, but his soul had changed its nature, a different mind looked forth from those eyes. Bertrande knew him for her husband, and yet she hesitated. Even so Penelope, on the return of Ulysses, required a certain proof to confirm the evidence of her eyes, and her long absent husband had to remind her of secrets known only to herself.

Martin, however, as if he understood Bertrande's feeling and divined some secret mistrust, used the most tender and affectionate phrases, and even the very pet names which close intimacy had formerly endeared to them.

"My queen," he said, "my beautiful dove, can you not lay aside your resentment? Is it still so strong that no submission can soften it? Cannot my repentance find grace in your eyes? My Bertrande, my Bertha, my Bertranilla, as I used to call you."

She tried to smile, but stopped short, puzzled;

the names were the very same, but the inflexion of voice quite different.

Martin took her hands in his. "What pretty hands! Do you still wear my ring? Yes, here it is, and with it the sapphire ring I gave you the day Sanxi was born."

Bertrande did not answer, but she took the child and placed him in his father's arms.

Martin showered caresses on his son, and spoke of the time when he carried him as a baby in the garden, lifting him up to the fruit trees, so that he could reach and try to bite the fruit. He recollected one day when the poor child got his leg terribly torn by thorns, and convinced himself, not without emotion, that the scar could still be seen.

Bertrande was touched by this display of affectionate recollections, and felt vexed at her own coldness. She came up to Martin and laid her hand in his. He said gently—

"My departure caused you great grief: I now repent what I did. But I was young, I was proud, and your reproaches were unjust."

"Ah!" said she, "you have not forgotten the cause of our quarrel?"

"It was little Rose, our neighbour, whom you said I was making love to, because you found us together at the spring in the little wood. I explained that we met only by chance,—besides, she was only

a child,—but you would not listen, and in your anger——"

"Ah! forgive me, Martin, forgive me!" she interrupted, in confusion.

"In your blind anger you took up, I know not what, something which lay handy, and flung it at me. And here is the mark," he continued, smiling, "this scar, which is still to be seen."

"Oh, Martin!" Bertrande exclaimed, "can you ever forgive me?"

"As you see," Martin replied, kissing her tenderly.

Much moved, Bertrande swept aside his hair, and looked at the scar visible on his forehead.

"But," she said, with surprise not free from alarm, "this scar seems to me like a fresh one."

"Ah!" Martin explained, with a little embarrassment; "it reopened lately. But I had thought no more about it. Let us forget it, Bertrande; I should not like a recollection which might make you think yourself less dear to me than you once were."

And he drew her upon his knee. She repelled him gently.

"Send the child to bed," said Martin. "To-morrow shall be for him; to-night you have the first place, Bertrande, you only."

The boy kissed his father and went.

Bertrande came and knelt beside her husband,

regarding him attentively with an uneasy smile, which did not appear to please him by any means.

"What is the matter?" said he. "Why do you examine me thus?"

"I do not know—forgive me, oh! forgive me! . . . But the happiness of seeing you was so great and unexpected, it is all like a dream. I must try to become accustomed to it; give me some time to collect myself; let me spend this night in prayer. I ought to offer my joy and my thanksgiving to Almighty God——"

"Not so," interrupted her husband, passing his arms round her neck and stroking her beautiful hair. "No; 'tis to me that your first thoughts are due. After so much weariness, my rest is in again beholding you, and my happiness after so many trials will be found in your love. That hope has supported me throughout, and I long to be assured that it is no illusion." So saying, he endeavoured to raise her.

"Oh," she murmured, "I pray you leave me."

"What!" he exclaimed angrily. "Bertrande, is this your love? Is it thus you keep faith with me? You will make me doubt the evidence of your friends; you will make me think that indifference, or even another love——"

"You insult me," said Bertrande, rising to her feet.

He caught her in his arms. "No, no; I think

nothing which could wound you, my queen, and I believe your fidelity, even as before, you know, on that first journey, when you wrote me these loving letters which I have treasured ever since. Here they are." And he drew forth some papers, on which Bertrande recognised her own handwriting. "Yes," he continued, "I have read and re-read them. See, you spoke then of your love and the sorrows of absence. But why all this trouble and terror? You tremble, just as you did when I first received you from your father's hands. . . . It was here, in this very room. . . . You begged me then to leave you, to let you spend the night in prayer; but I insisted, do you remember? and pressed you to my heart, as I do now."

"Oh," she murmured weakly, "have pity!"

But the words were intercepted by a kiss, and the remembrance of the past, the happiness of the present, resumed their sway; the imaginary terrors were forgotten, and the curtains closed around the marriage-bed.

The next day was a festival in the village of Artigues. Martin returned the visits of all who had come to welcome him the previous night, and there were endless recognitions and embracings. The young men remembered that he had played with them when they were little; the old men, that they had been at his wedding when he was only twelve.

The women remembered having envied Bertrande, especially the pretty Rose, daughter of Marcel, the apothecary, she who had roused the demon of jealousy in the poor wife's heart. And Rose knew quite well that the jealousy was not without some cause; for Martin had indeed shown her attention, and she was unable to see him again without emotion. She was now the wife of a rich peasant, ugly, old, and jealous, and she compared, sighing, her unhappy lot with that of her more fortunate neighbour. Martin's sisters detained him amongst them, and spoke of their childish games and of their parents, both dead in Biscay. Martin dried the tears which flowed at these recollections of the past, and turned their thoughts to rejoicing. Banquets were given and received. Martin invited all his relations and former friends; an easy gaiety prevailed. It was remarked that the hero of the feast refrained from wine; he was thereupon reproached, but answered that on account of the wounds he had received he was obliged to avoid excess. The excuse was admitted, the result of Martin's precautions being that he kept a clear head on his shoulders, while all the rest had their tongues loosed by drunkenness.

"Ah!" exclaimed one of the guests, who had studied a little medicine, "Martin is quite right to be afraid of drink. Wounds which have thoroughly

healed may be reopened and inflamed by intemperance, and wine in the case of recent wounds is deadly poison. Men have died on the field of battle in an hour or two merely because they had swallowed a little brandy."

Martin Guerre grew pale, and began a conversation with the pretty Rose, his neighbour. Bertrande observed this, but without uneasiness; she had suffered too much from her former suspicions, besides her husband showed her so much affection that she was now quite happy.

When the first few days were over, Martin began to look into his affairs. His property had suffered by his long absence, and he was obliged to go to Biscay to claim his little estate there, the law having already laid hands upon it. It was several months before, by dint of making judicious sacrifices, he could regain possession of the house and fields which had belonged to his father. This at last accomplished, he returned to Artigues, in order to resume the management of his wife's property, and with this end in view, about eleven months after his return, he paid a visit to his uncle Pierre.

Pierre was expecting him; he was extremely polite, desired Martin to sit down, overwhelmed him with compliments, knitting his brows as he discovered that his nephew decidedly meant business. Martin broke silence.

"Uncle," he said, "I come to thank you for the care you have taken of my wife's property; she could never have managed it alone. You have received the income in the family interest: as a good guardian, I expected no less from your affection. But now that I have returned, and am free from other cares, we will go over the accounts, if you please."

His uncle coughed and cleared his voice before replying, then said slowly, as if counting his words—

"It is all accounted for, my dear nephew; Heaven be praised! I don't owe you anything."

"What!" exclaimed the astonished Martin, "but the whole income?"

"Was well and properly employed in the maintenance of your wife and child."

"What! a thousand livres for that? And Bertrande lived alone, so quietly and simply! Nonsense! it is impossible."

"Any surplus," resumed the old man, quite unmoved,—"any surplus went to pay the expenses of seed-time and harvest."

"What! at a time when labour costs next to nothing?"

"Here is the account," said Pierre.

"Then the account is a false one," returned his nephew.

Pierre thought it advisable to appear extremely

offended and angry, and Martin, exasperated at his evident dishonesty, took still higher ground, and threatened to bring an action against him. Pierre ordered him to leave the house, and suiting actions to words, took hold of his arm to enforce his departure. Martin, furious, turned and raised his fist to strike.

"What! strike your uncle, wretched boy!" exclaimed the old man.

Martin's hand dropped, but he left the house uttering reproaches and insults, among which Pierre distinguished:

"Cheat that you are!"

"That is a word I shall remember," cried the angry old man, slamming his door violently.

Martin brought an action before the judge at Rieux, and in course of time obtained a decree, which, reviewing the accounts presented by Pierre, disallowed them, and condemned the dishonest guardian to pay his nephew four hundred livres for each year of his administration. The day on which this sum had to be disbursed from his strong box the old usurer vowed vengeance, but until he could gratify his hatred he was forced to conceal it, and to receive attempts at reconciliation with a friendly smile. It was not until six months later, on the occasion of a joyous festivity, that Martin again set foot in his uncle's house. The bells were ringing

for the birth of a child, there was great gaiety at Bertrande's house, where all the guests were waiting on the threshold for the godfather in order to take the infant to church, and when Martin appeared, escorting his uncle, who was adorned with a huge bouquet for the occasion, and who now came forward and took the hand of Rose, the pretty godmother, there were cries of joy on all sides. Bertrande was delighted at this reconciliation, and dreamed only of happiness. She was so happy now, her long sorrow was atoned for, her regret was at an end, her prayers seemed to have been heard, the long interval between the former delights and the present seemed wiped out as if the bond of union had never been broken, and if she remembered her grief at all, it was only to intensify the new joys by comparison. She loved her husband more than ever; he was full of affection for her, and she was grateful for his love. The past had now no shadow, the future no cloud, and the birth of a daughter, drawing still closer the links which united them, seemed a new pledge of felicity. Alas! the horizon which appeared so bright and clear to the poor woman was doomed soon again to be overcast.

The very evening of the christening party, a band of musicians and jugglers happened to pass through the village, and the inhabitants showed themselves liberal. Pierre asked questions, and found that the

leader of the band was a Spaniard. He invited the man to his own house, and remained closeted with him for nearly an hour, dismissing him at length with a refilled purse. Two days later the old man announced to the family that he was going to Picardy to see a former partner on a matter of business, and he departed accordingly, saying he should return before long.

The day on which Bertrande again saw her uncle was, indeed, a terrible one. She was sitting by the cradle of the lately-born infant, watching for its awakening, when the door opened, and Pierre Guerre strode in. Bertrande drew back with an instinct of terror as soon as she saw him, for his expression was at once wicked and joyful—an expression of gratified hate, of mingled rage and triumph, and his smile was terrible to behold. She did not venture to speak, but motioned him to a seat. He came straight up to her, and raising his head, said loudly—

"Kneel down at once, madame—kneel down, and ask pardon from Almighty God!"

"Are you mad, Pierre?" she replied, gazing at him in astonishment.

"You, at least, ought to know that I am not."

"Pray for forgiveness—I—! and what for, in Heaven's name?"

"For the crime in which you are an accomplice."

"Please explain yourself."

"Oh!" said Pierre, with bitter irony, "a woman always thinks herself innocent as long as her sin is hidden; she thinks the truth will never be known, and her conscience goes quietly to sleep, forgetting her faults. Here is a woman who thought her sins nicely concealed; chance favoured her: an absent husband, probably no more; another man so exactly like him in height, face, and manner that everyone else is deceived! Is it strange that a weak, sensitive woman, wearied of widowhood, should willingly allow herself to be imposed on?"

Bertrande listened without understanding; she tried to interrupt, but Pierre went on—

"It was easy to accept this stranger without having to blush for it, easy to give him the name and the rights of a husband! She could even appear faithful while really guilty; she could seem constant, though really fickle; and she could, under a veil of mystery, at once reconcile her honour, her duty—perhaps even her love."

"What on earth do you mean?" cried Bertrande, wringing her hands in terror.

"That you are countenancing an impostor who is not your husband."

Feeling as if the ground were passing from beneath her, Bertrande staggered, and caught at the nearest piece of furniture to save herself from fall-

ing; then, collecting all her strength to meet this extraordinary attack, she faced the old man.

"What! my husband, your nephew, an impostor!"

"Don't you know it?"

"I!!"

This cry, which came from her heart, convinced Pierre that she did not know, and that she had sustained a terrible shock. He continued more quietly—

"What, Bertrande, is it possible you were really deceived?"

"Pierre, you are killing me; your words are torture. No more mystery, I entreat. What do you know? What do you suspect? Tell me plainly at once."

"Have you courage to hear it?"

"I must," said the trembling woman.

"God is my witness that I would willingly have kept it from you, but you must know; if only for the safety of your soul entangled in so deadly a snare, . . . there is yet time, if you follow my advice. Listen: the man with whom you are living, who dares to call himself Martin Guerre, is a cheat, an impostor——"

"How dare you say so?"

"Because I have discovered it. Yes, I had always a vague suspicion, an uneasy feeling, and in spite of

the marvellous resemblance I could never feel as if he were really my sister's child. The day he raised his hand to strike me—yes, that day I condemned him utterly. . . . Chance has justified me! A wandering Spaniard, an old soldier, who spent a night in the village here, was also present at the battle of St. Quentin, and saw Martin Guerre receive a terrible gunshot wound in the leg. After the battle, being wounded, he betook himself to the neighbouring village, and distinctly heard a surgeon in the next room say that a wounded man must have his leg amputated, and would very likely not survive the operation. The door opened, he saw the sufferer, and knew him for Martin Guerre. So much the Spaniard told me. Acting on this information, I went on pretence of business to the village he named, I questioned the inhabitants, and this is what I learned."

"Well?" said Bertrande, pale, and gasping with emotion.

"I learned that the wounded man had his leg taken off, and, as the surgeon predicted, he must have died in a few hours, for he was never seen again."

Bertrande remained a few moments as if annihilated by this appalling revelation; then, endeavoring to repel the horrible thought—

"No," she cried, "no, it is impossible! It is a lie intended to ruin him—to ruin us all."

"What! you do not believe me?"

"No, never, never!"

"Say rather you pretend to disbelieve me: the truth has pierced your heart, but you wish to deny it. Think, however, of the danger to your immortal soul."

"Silence, wretched man! . . . No, God would not send me so terrible a trial. What proof can you show of the truth of your words?"

"The witnesses I have mentioned."

"Nothing more?"

"No, not as yet."

"Fine proofs indeed! The story of a vagabond who flattered your hatred in hope of a reward, the gossip of a distant village, the recollections of ten years back, and finally, your own word, the word of a man who seeks only revenge, the word of a man who swore to make Martin pay dearly for the results of his own avarice, a man of furious passions such as yours! No, Pierre, no, I do not believe you, and I never will!"

"Other people may perhaps be less incredulous, and if I accuse him publicly——"

"Then I shall contradict you publicly!" And coming quickly forward, her eyes shining with virtuous anger—

"Leave this house, go," she said; "it is you yourself who are the impostor—go!"

"I shall yet know how to convince everyone, and will make you acknowledge it," cried the furious old man.

He went out, and Bertrande sank exhausted into a chair. All the strength which had supported her against Pierre vanished as soon as she was alone, and in spite of her resistance to suspicion, the terrible light of doubt penetrated her heart, and extinguished the pure torch of trustfulness which had guided her hitherto—a doubt, alas! which attacked at once her honour and her love, for she loved with all a woman's tender affection. Just as actual poison gradually penetrates and circulates through the whole system, corrupting the blood and affecting the very sources of life until it causes the destruction of the whole body, so does that mental poison, suspicion, extend its ravages in the soul which has received it. Bertrande remembered with terror her first feelings at the sight of the returned Martin Guerre, her involuntary repugnance, her astonishment at not feeling more in touch with the husband whom she had so sincerely regretted. She remembered also, as if she saw it for the first time, that Martin, formerly quick, lively, and hasty tempered, now seemed thoughtful, and fully master of himself.

This change of character she had supposed due to the natural development of age, she now trembled at the idea of another possible cause. Some other

little details began to occur to her mind—the forgetfulness or abstraction of her husband as to a few insignificant things; thus it sometimes happened that he did not answer to his name of Martin, also that he mistook the road to a hermitage, formerly well known to them both, and again that he could not answer when addressed in Basque, although he himself had taught her the little she knew of this language. Besides, since his return, he would never write in her presence, did he fear that she would notice some difference? She had paid little or no attention to these trifles; now, pieced together, they assumed an alarming importance. An appalling terror seized Bertrande: was she to remain in this uncertainty, or should she seek an explanation which might prove her destruction? And how discover the truth—by questioning the guilty man, by noting his confusion, his change of colour, by forcing a confession from him? But she had lived with him for two years, he was the father of her child, she could not ruin him without ruining herself, and, an explanation once sought, she could neither punish him and escape disgrace, nor pardon him without sharing his guilt. To reproach him with his conduct and then keep silence would destroy her peace for ever; to cause a scandal by denouncing him would bring dishonour upon herself and her child. Night found her involved in these hideous perplexities, too

weak to surmount them; an icy chill came over her, she went to bed, and awoke in a high fever. For several days she hovered between life and death, and Martin Guerre bestowed the most tender care upon her. She was greatly moved thereby, having one of those impressionable minds which recognise kindness fully as much as injury. When she was a little recovered and her mental power began to return, she had only a vague recollection of what had occurred, and thought she had had a frightful dream. She asked if Pierre Guerre had been to see her, and found he had not been near the house. This could only be explained by the scene which had taken place, and she then recollected all—the accusation Pierre had made, her own observations which had confirmed it, all her grief and trouble. She inquired about the village news. Pierre, evidently, had kept silence—why? Had he seen that his suspicions were unjust, or was he only seeking further evidence? She sank back into her cruel uncertainty, and resolved to watch Martin closely, before deciding as to his guilt or innocence.

How was she to suppose that God had created two faces so exactly alike, two beings precisely similar, and then sent them together into the world, and on the same track, merely to compass the ruin of an unhappy woman! A terrible idea took possession of her mind, an idea not uncommon in an age of

superstition, namely, that the Enemy himself could assume human form, and could borrow the semblance of a dead man in order to capture another soul for his infernal kingdom. Acting on this idea, she hastened to the church, paid for masses to be said, and prayed fervently. She expected every day to see the demon forsake the body he had animated, but her vows, offerings, and prayers had no result. But Heaven sent her an idea which she wondered had not occurred to her sooner. "If the Tempter," she said to herself, "has taken the form of my beloved husband, his power being supreme for evil, the resemblance would be exact, and no difference, however slight, would exist. If, however, it is only another man who resembles him, God must have made them with some slight distinguishing marks."

She then remembered, what she had not thought of before, having been quite unsuspicious before her uncle's accusation, and nearly out of her mind between mental and bodily suffering since. She remembered that on her husband's left shoulder, almost on the neck, there used to be one of those small, almost imperceptible, but ineffaceable birth-marks. Martin wore his hair very long, it was difficult to see if the mark were there or not. One night, while he slept, Bertrande cut away a lock of hair from the place where this sign ought to be—it was not there!

Convinced at length of the deception, Bertrande suffered inexpressible anguish. This man whom she had loved and respected for two whole years, whom she had taken to her heart as a husband bitterly mourned for—this man was a cheat, an infamous impostor, and she, all unknowing, was yet a guilty woman! Her child was illegitimate, and the curse of Heaven was due to this sacrilegious union. To complete the misfortune, she was already expecting another infant. She would have killed herself, but her religion and the love of her children forbade it. Kneeling before her child's cradle, she entreated pardon from the father of the one for the father of the other. She would not bring herself to proclaim aloud their infamy.

"Oh!" she said, "thou whom I loved, thou who art no more, thou knowest no guilty thought ever entered my mind! When I saw this man, I thought I beheld thee; when I was happy, I thought I owed it to thee; it was thee whom I loved in him. Surely thou dost not desire that by a public avowal I should bring shame and disgrace on these children and on myself."

She rose calm and strengthened: it seemed as if a heavenly inspiration had marked out her duty. To suffer in silence, such was the course she adopted,—a life of sacrifice and self-denial which she offered to God as an expiation for her invol-

untary sin. But who can understand the workings of the human heart? This man whom she ought to have loathed, this man who had made her an innocent partner in his crime, this unmasked impostor whom she should have beheld only with disgust, she—loved him! The force of habit, the ascendancy he had obtained over her, the love he had shown her, a thousand sympathies felt in her inmost heart, all these had so much influence, that, instead of accusing and cursing him, she sought to excuse him on the plea of a passion to which, doubtless, he had yielded when usurping the name and place of another. She feared punishment for him yet more than disgrace for herself, and though resolved to no longer allow him the rights purchased by crime, she yet trembled at the idea of losing his love. It was this above all which decided her to keep eternal silence about her discovery; one single word which proved that his imposture was known would raise an insurmountable barrier between them.

To conceal her trouble entirely was, however, beyond her power; her eyes frequently showed traces of her secret tears. Martin several times asked the cause of her sorrow; she tried to smile and excuse herself, only immediately sinking back into her gloomy thoughts. Martin thought it mere caprice; he observed her loss of colour, her hollow cheeks, and concluded that age was impairing her beauty,

and became less attentive to her. His absences became longer and more frequent, and he did not conceal his impatience and annoyance at being watched; for her looks hung upon his, and she observed his coldness and change with much grief. Having sacrificed all in order to retain his love, she now saw it slowly slipping away from her.

Another person also observed attentively. Pierre Guerre since his explanation with Bertrande had apparently discovered no more evidence, and did not dare to bring an accusation without some positive proofs. Consequently he lost no chance of watching the proceedings of his supposed nephew, silently hoping that chance might put him on the track of a discovery. He also concluded from Bertrande's state of melancholy that she had convinced herself of the fraud, but had resolved to conceal it.

Martin was then endeavoring to sell a part of his property, and this necessitated frequent interviews with the lawyers of the neighbouring town. Twice in the week he went to Rieux, and to make the journey easier, used to start on horseback about seven in the evening, sleep at Rieux, and return the following afternoon. This arrangement did not escape his enemy's notice, who was not long in convincing himself that part of the time ostensibly spent on this journey was otherwise employed.

Towards ten o'clock on the evening of a dark night, the door of a small house lying about half a gunshot from the village opened gently for the exit of a man wrapped in a large cloak, followed by a young woman, who accompanied him some distance. Arrived at the parting point, they separated with a tender kiss and a few murmured words of adieu; the lover took his horse, which was fastened to a tree, mounted, and rode off towards Rieux. When the sounds died away, the woman turned slowly and sadly towards her home, but as she approached the door a man suddenly turned the corner of the house and barred her away. Terrified, she was on the point of crying for help, when he seized her arm and ordered her to be silent.

"Rose," he whispered, "I know everything: that man is your lover. In order to receive him safely, you send your old husband to sleep by means of a drug stolen from your father's shop. This intrigue has been going on for a month; twice a week, at seven o'clock, your door is opened to this man, who does not proceed on his way to the town until ten. I know your lover: he is my nephew."

Petrified with terror, Rose fell on her knees and implored mercy.

"Yes," replied Pierre, "you may well be frightened: I have your secret. I have only to publish it and you are ruined for ever."

"You will not do it!" entreated the guilty woman, clasping her hands.

"I have only to tell your husband," continued Pierre, "that his wife has dishonoured him, and to explain the reason of his unnaturally heavy sleep."

"He will kill me!"

"No doubt: he is jealous, he is an Italian, he will know how to avenge himself—even as I do."

"But I never did you any harm," Rose cried in despair. "Oh! have pity, have mercy, and spare me!"

"On one condition."

"What is it?"

"Come with me."

Terrified almost out of her mind, Rose allowed him to lead her away.

Bertrande had just finished her evening prayer, and was preparing for bed, when she was startled by several knocks at her door. Thinking that perhaps some neighbour was in need of help, she opened it immediately, and to her astonishment beheld a dishevelled woman whom Pierre grasped by the arm. He exclaimed vehemently—

"Here is thy judge! Now, confess all to Bertrande!"

Bertrande did not at once recognise the woman, who fell at her feet, overcome by Pierre's threats.

"Tell the truth here," he continued, "or I go

and tell it to your husband, at your own home!"

"Ah! madame, kill me," said the unhappy creature, hiding her face; "let me rather die by your hand than his!"

Bertrande, bewildered, did not understand the position in the least, but she recognised Rose.

"But what is the matter, madame? Why are you here at this hour, pale and weeping? Why has my uncle dragged you hither? I am to judge you, does he say? Of what crime are you guilty?"

"Martin might answer that, if he were here," remarked Pierre.

A lightning flash of jealousy shot through Bertrande's soul at these words, all her former suspicions revived.

"What!" she said, "my husband! What do you mean?"

"That he left this woman's house only a little while ago, that for a month they have been meeting secretly. You are betrayed: I have seen them, and she does not dare to deny it."

"Have mercy!" cried Rose, still kneeling.

The cry was a confession. Bertrande became pale as death. "O God!" she murmured, "deceived, betrayed—and by him!"

"For a month past," repeated the old man.

"Oh! the wretch," she continued, with increasing passion; "then his whole life is a lie! He has abused

my credulity, he now abuses my love! He does not know me! He thinks he can trample on me—me, in whose power are his fortune, his honour, his very life itself!"

Then, turning to Rose—

"And you, miserable woman! by what unworthy artifice did you gain his love? Was it by witchcraft? or some poisonous philtre learned from your worthy father?"

"Alas! no, madame; my weakness is my only crime, and also my only excuse. I loved him, long ago, when I was only a young girl, and these memories have been my ruin."

"Memories? What! did you also think you were loving the same man? Are you also his dupe? Or are you only pretending, in order to find a rag of excuse to cover your wickedness?"

It was now Rose who failed to understand; Bertrande continued, with growing excitement—

"Yes, it was not enough to usurp the rights of a husband and father, he thought to play his part still better by deceiving the mistress also. . . . Ah! it is amusing, is it not? You also, Rose, you thought he was your old lover! Well, I at least am excusable, I the wife, who only thought she was faithful to her husband!"

"What does it all mean?" asked the terrified Rose.

"It means that this man is an impostor and that I will unmask him. Revenge! revenge!"

Pierre came forward. "Bertrande," he said, "so long as I thought you were happy, when I feared to disturb your peace, I was silent, I repressed my just indignation, and I spared the usurper of the name and rights of my nephew. Do you now give me leave to speak?"

"Yes," she replied in a hollow voice.

"You will not contradict me?"

By way of answer she sat down by the table and wrote a few hasty lines with a trembling hand, then gave them to Pierre, whose eyes sparkled with joy.

"Yes," he said, "vengeance for him, but for her pity. Let this humiliation be her only punishment. I promised silence in return for confession, will you grant it?"

Bertrande assented with a contemptuous gesture.

"Go, fear not," said the old man, and Rose went out. Pierre also left the house.

Left to herself, Bertrande felt utterly worn out by so much emotion; indignation gave way to depression. She began to realise what she had done, and the scandal which would fall on her own head. Just then her baby awoke, and held out its arms, smiling, and calling for its father. Its father, was he not a criminal? Yes! but was it for her to ruin him, to invoke the law, to send him to death, after

having taken him to her heart, to deliver him to infamy which would recoil on her own head and her child's and on the infant which was yet unborn? If he had sinned before God, was it not for God to punish him? If against herself, ought she not rather to overwhelm him with contempt? But to invoke the help of strangers to expiate this offence, to lay bare the troubles of her life, to unveil the sanctuary of the nuptial couch—in short, to summon the whole world to behold this fatal scandal, was not that what in her imprudent anger she had really done? She repented bitterly of her haste, she sought to avert the consequences, and notwithstanding the night and the bad weather, she hurried at once to Pierre's dwelling, hoping at all costs to withdraw her denunciation. He was not there: he had at once taken a horse and started for Rieux. Her accusation was already on its way to the magistrates!

At break of day the house where Martin Guerre lodged when at Rieux was surrounded by soldiers. He came forward with confidence and inquired what was wanted. On hearing the accusation, he changed colour slightly, then collected himself, and made no resistance. When he came before the judge, Bertrande's petition was read to him, declaring him to be "an impostor, who falsely, audaciously, and treacherously had deceived her by taking the name and assuming the person of Martin

Guerre," and demanding that he should be required to entreat pardon from God, the king, and herself.

The prisoner listened calmly to the charge, and met it courageously, only evincing profound surprise at such a step being taken by a wife who had lived with him for two years since his return, and who only now thought of disputing the rights he had so long enjoyed. As he was ignorant both of Bertrande's suspicions and their confirmation, and also of the jealousy which had inspired her accusation, his astonishment was perfectly natural, and did not at all appear to be assumed. He attributed the whole charge to the machinations of his uncle, Pierre Guerre; an old man, he said, who, being governed entirely by avarice and the desire of revenge, now disputed his name and rights, in order the better to deprive him of his property, which might be worth from sixteen to eighteen hundred livres. In order to attain his end, this wicked man had not hesitated to pervert his wife's mind, and at the risk of her own dishonour had instigated this calumnious charge—a horrible and unheard-of thing in the mouth of a lawful wife. "Ah! I do not blame her," he cried; "she must suffer more than I do, if she really entertains doubts such as these; but I deplore her readiness to listen to these extraordinary calumnies originated by my enemy."

The judge was a good deal impressed by so much

assurance. The accused was relegated to prison, whence he was brought two days later to encounter a formal examination.

He began by explaining the cause of his long absence, originating, he said, in a domestic quarrel, as his wife well remembered. He then related his life during these eight years. At first he wandered over the country, wherever his curiosity and the love of travel led him. He then had crossed the frontier, revisited Biscay, where he was born, and having entered the service of the Cardinal of Burgos, he passed thence into the army of the King of Spain. He was wounded at the battle of St. Quentin, conveyed to a neighbouring village, where he recovered, although threatened with amputation. Anxious to again behold his wife and child, his other relations and the land of his adoption, he returned to Artigues, where he was immediately recognised by everyone, including the identical Pierre Guerre, his uncle, who now had the cruelty to disavow him. In fact, the latter had shown him special affection up to the day when Martin required an account of his stewardship. Had he only had the cowardice to sacrifice his money and thereby defraud his children, he would not to-day be charged as an impostor. "But," continued Martin, "I resisted, and a violent quarrel ensued, in which anger perhaps carried me too far; Pierre

Guerre, cunning and revengeful, has waited in silence. He has taken his time and his measures to organise this plot, hoping thereby to obtain his ends, to bring justice to the help of his avarice, and to acquire the spoils he coveted, and revenge for his defeat, by means of a sentence obtained from the scruples of the judges." Besides these explanations, which did not appear wanting in probability, Martin vehemently protested his innocence, demanding that his wife should be confronted with him, and declaring that in his presence she would not sustain the charge of personation brought against him, and that her mind not being animated by the blind hatred which dominated his persecutor, the truth would undoubtedly prevail.

He now, in his turn, demanded that the judge should acknowledge his innocence, and prove it by condemning his calumniators to the punishment invoked against himself; that his wife, Bertrande de Rolls, should be secluded in some house where her mind could no longer be perverted, and, finally, that his innocence should be declared, and expenses and compensations awarded him.

After this speech, delivered with warmth, and with every token of sincerity, he answered without difficulty all the interrogations of the judge. The following are some of the questions and answers, just as they have come down to us:—

"In what part of Biscay were you born?"

"In the village of Aymes, province of Guipuscoa."

"What were the names of your parents?"

"Antonio Guerre and Marie Toreada."

"Are they still living?"

"My father died June 15th, 1530; my mother survived him three years and twelve days."

"Have you any brothers and sisters?"

"I had one brother, who only lived three months. My four sisters, Inèz, Dorothea, Marietta, and Pedrina, all came to live at Artigues when I did; they are there still, and they all recognised me."

"What is the date of your marriage?"

"January 10, 1539."

"Who were present at the ceremony?"

"My father-in-law, my mother-in-law, my uncle, my two sisters, Maître Marcel and his daughter Rose; a neighbour called Claude Perrin, who got drunk at the wedding feast; also Giraud, the poet, who composed verses in our honour."

"Who was the priest who married you?"

"The old curé, Pascal Guérin, whom I did not find alive when I returned."

"What special circumstances occurred on the wedding-day?"

"At midnight exactly, our neighbour, Catherine Boëre, brought us the repast which is known as

'medianoche.' This woman has recognised me, as also our old Marguerite, who has remained with us ever since the wedding."

"What is the date of your son's birth?"

"February 10, 1548, nine years after our marriage. I was only twelve when the ceremony took place, and did not arrive at manhood till several years later."

"Give the date of your leaving Artigues."

"It was in August 1549. As I left the village, I met Claude Perrin and the curé Pascal, and took leave of them. I went towards Beauvais, and I passed through Orleans, Bourges, Limoges, Bordeaux, and Toulouse. If you want the names of people whom I saw and to whom I spoke, you can have them. What more can I say?"

Never, indeed, was there a more apparently veracious statement! All the doings of Martin Guerre seemed to be most faithfully described, and surely only himself could thus narrate his own actions. As the historian remarks, alluding to the story of Amphitryon, Mercury himself could not better reproduce all Sosia's actions, gestures, and words, than did the false Martin Guerre those of the real one.

In accordance with the demand of the accused, Bertrande de Rolls was detained in seclusion, in order to remove her from the influence of Pierre

Guerre. The latter, however, did not waste time, and during the month spent in examining the witnesses cited by Martin, his diligent enemy, guided by some vague traces, departed on a journey, from which he did not return alone.

All the witnesses bore out the statement of the accused; the latter heard this in prison, and rejoiced, hoping for a speedy release. Before long he was again brought before the judge, who told him that his deposition had been confirmed by all the witnesses examined.

"Do you know of no others?" continued the magistrate. "Have you no relatives except those you have mentioned?"

"I have no others," answered the prisoner.

"Then what do you say to this man?" said the judge, opening a door.

An old man issued forth, who fell on the prisoner's neck, exclaiming, "My nephew!"

Martin trembled in every limb, but only for a moment. Promptly recovering himself, and gazing calmly at the newcomer, he asked coolly—

"And who may you be?"

"What!" said the old man, "do you not know me? Dare you deny me?—me, your mother's brother, Carbon Barreau, the old soldier! Me, who dandled you on my knee in your infancy; me, who taught you later to carry a musket; me, who met

you during the war at an inn in Picardy, when you fled secretly. Since then I have sought you everywhere; I have spoken of you, and described your face and person, until a worthy inhabitant of this country offered to bring me hither, where indeed I did not expect to find my sister's son imprisoned and fettered as a malefactor. What is his crime, may it please your honour?"

"You shall hear," replied the magistrate. "Then you identify the prisoner as your nephew? You affirm his name to be——?"

"Arnauld du Thill, also called 'Pansette,' after his father, Jacques Pansa. His mother was Thérèse Barreau, my sister, and he was born in the village of Sagias."

"What have you to say?" demanded the judge, turning to the accused.

"Three things," replied the latter, unabashed: "this man is either mad, or he has been suborned to tell lies, or he is simply mistaken."

The old man was struck dumb with astonishment. But his supposed nephew's start of terror had not been lost upon the judge, also much impressed by the straightforward frankness of Carbon Barreau. He caused fresh investigations to be made, and other inhabitants of Sagias were summoned to Rieux, who one and all agreed in identifying the accused as the same Arnauld du Thill who had been born

and had grown up under their very eyes. Several deposed that as he grew up he had taken to evil courses, and become an adept in theft and lying, not fearing even to take the sacred name of God in vain, in order to cover the untruth of his daring assertions. From such testimony the judge naturally concluded that Arnauld du Thill was quite capable of carrying on an imposture, and that the impudence which he displayed was natural to his character. Moreover, he noted that the prisoner, who averred that he was born in Biscay, knew only a few words of the Basque language, and used these quite wrongly. He heard later another witness who deposed that the original Martin Guerre was a good wrestler and skilled in the art of fence, whereas the prisoner, having wished to try what he could do, showed no skill whatever. Finally, a shoemaker was interrogated, and his evidence was not the least damning. Martin Guerre, he declared, required twelve holes to lace his boots, and his surprise had been great when he found those of the prisoner had only nine. Considering all these points, and the cumulative evidence, the judge of Rieux set aside the favourable testimony, which he concluded had been the outcome of general credulity, imposed on by an extraordinary resemblance. He gave due weight also to Bertrande's accusation, although she had never confirmed it, and now main-

tained an obstinate silence; and he pronounced a judgment by which Arnauld du Thill was declared "attainted and convicted of imposture, and was therefore condemned to be beheaded; after which his body should be divided into four quarters, and exposed at the four corners of the town."

This sentence, as soon as it was known, caused much diversity of opinion in the town. The prisoner's enemies praised the wisdom of the judge, and those less prejudiced condemned his decision; as such conflicting testimony left room for doubt. Besides, it was thought that the possession of property and the future of the children required much consideration, also that the most absolute certainty was demanded before annulling a past of two whole years, untroubled by any counter claim whatever.

The condemned man appealed from this sentence to the Parliament of Toulouse. This court decided that the case required more careful consideration than had yet been given to it, and began by ordering Arnauld du Thill to be confronted with Pierre Guerre and Bertrande de Rolls.

Who can say what feelings animate a man who, already once condemned, finds himself subjected to a second trial? The torture scarcely ended begins again, and Hope, though reduced to a shadow, regains her sway over his imagination, which clings to her skirts, as it were, with desperation. The

exhausting efforts must be recommenced; it is the last struggle—a struggle which is more desperate in proportion as there is less strength to maintain it. In this case the defendant was not one of those who are easily cast down; he collected all his energy, all his courage, hoping to come victoriously out of the new combat which lay before him.

The magistrates assembled in the great hall of the Parliament, and the prisoner appeared before them. He had first to deal with Pierre, and confronted him calmly, letting him speak, without showing any emotion. He then replied with indignant reproaches, dwelling on Pierre's greed and avarice, his vows of vengeance, the means employed to work upon Bertrande, his secret manœuvres in order to gain his ends, and the unheard-of animosity displayed in hunting up accusers, witnesses, and calumniators. He defied Pierre to prove that he was not Martin Guerre, his nephew, inasmuch as Pierre had publicly acknowledged and embraced him, and his tardy suspicions only dated from the time of their violent quarrel. His language was so strong and vehement, that Pierre became confused and was unable to answer, and the encounter turned entirely in Arnauld's favour, who seemed to overawe his adversary from a height of injured innocence, while the latter appeared as a disconcerted slanderer.

The scene of his confrontation with Bertrande

took a wholly different character. The poor woman, pale, cast down, worn by sorrow, came staggering before the tribunal, in an almost fainting condition. She endeavoured to collect herself, but as soon as she saw the prisoner she hung her head and covered her face with her hands. He approached her and besought her in the gentlest accents not to persist in an accusation which might send him to the scaffold, not thus to avenge any sins he might have committed against her, although he could not reproach himself with any really serious fault.

Bertrande started, and murmured in a whisper, "And Rose?"

"Ah!" Arnauld exclaimed, astonished at this revelation.

His part was instantly taken. Turning to the judges—

"Gentlemen," he said, "my wife is a jealous woman! Ten years ago, when I left her, she had formed these suspicions; they were the cause of my voluntary exile. To-day she again accuses me of guilty relations with the same person; I neither deny nor acknowledge them, but I affirm that it is the blind passion of jealousy which, aided by my uncle's suggestions, guided my wife's hand when she signed this denunciation."

Bertrande remained silent.

"Do you dare," he continued, turning towards

her,—" do you dare to swear before God that jealousy did not inspire you with the wish to ruin me? "

" And you," she replied, " dare you swear that I was deceived in my suspicions? "

" You see, gentlemen," exclaimed the prisoner triumphantly, " her jealousy breaks forth before your eyes. Whether I am, or am not, guilty of the sin she attributes to me, is not the question for you to decide. Can you conscientiously admit the testimony of a woman who, after publicly acknowledging me, after receiving me in her house, after living two years in perfect amity with me, has, in a fit of angry vengeance, thought she could give the lie to all her words and actions? Ah! Bertrande," he continued, " if it only concerned my life I think I could forgive a madness of which your love is both the cause and the excuse, but you are a mother, think of that! My punishment will recoil on the head of my daughter, who is unhappy enough to have been born since our reunion, and also on our unborn child, which you condemn beforehand to curse the union which gave it being. Think of this, Bertrande, you will have to answer before God for what you are now doing! "

The unhappy woman fell on her knees, weeping.

" I adjure you," he continued solemnly, " you, my wife, Bertrande de Rolls, to swear now, here, on the crucifix, that I am an impostor and a cheat."

A crucifix was placed before Bertrande; she made a sign as if to push it away, endeavoured to speak, and feebly exclaimed, "No," then fell to the ground, and was carried out insensible.

This scene considerably shook the opinion of the magistrates. They could not believe that an impostor, whatever he might be, would have sufficient daring and presence of mind thus to turn into mockery all that was most sacred. They set a new inquiry on foot, which, instead of producing enlightenment, only plunged them into still greater obscurity. Out of thirty witnesses heard, more than three-quarters agreed in identifying as Martin Guerre the man who claimed his name. Never was greater perplexity caused by more extraordinary appearances. The remarkable resemblance upset all reasoning: some recognised him as Arnauld du Thill, and others asserted the exact contrary. He could hardly understand Basque, some said, though born in Biscay, was that astonishing, seeing he was only three when he left the country? He could neither wrestle nor fence well, but having no occasion to practise these exercises he might well have forgotten them. The shoemaker who made his shoes aforetime, thought he took another measure, but he might have made a mistake before or be mistaken now. The prisoner further defended himself by recapitulating the circumstances of his first meet-

ing with Bertrande, on his return, the thousand and one little details he had mentioned which he only could have known, also the letters in his possession, all of which could only be explained by the assumption that he was the veritable Martin Guerre. Was it likely that he would be wounded over the left eye and leg as the missing man was supposed to be? Was it likely that the old servant, that the four sisters, his uncle Pierre, many persons to whom he had related facts known only to himself, that all the community in short, would have recognised him? And even the very intrigue suspected by Bertrande, which had aroused her jealous anger, this very intrigue, if it really existed, was it not another proof of the verity of his claim, since the person concerned, as interested and as penetrating as the legitimate wife, had also accepted him as her former lover? Surely here was a mass of evidence sufficient to cast light on the case. Imagine an impostor arriving for the first time in a place where all the inhabitants are unknown to him, and attempting to personate a man who had dwelt there, who would have connections of all kinds, who would have played his part in a thousand different scenes, who would have confided his secrets, his opinions, to relations, friends, acquaintances, to all sorts of people; who had also a wife—that is to say, a person under whose eyes nearly his whole life would be passed, a

person would study him perpetually, with whom he would be continually conversing on every sort of subject. Could such an impostor sustain his impersonation for a single day, without his memory playing him false? From the physical and moral impossibility of playing such a part, was it not reasonable to conclude that the accused, who had maintained it for more than two years, was the true Martin Guerre?

There seemed, in fact, to be nothing which could account for such an attempt being successfully made unless recourse was had to an accusation of sorcery. The idea of handing him over to the ecclesiastical authorities was briefly discussed, but proofs were necessary, and the judges hesitated. It is a principle of justice, which has become a precept in law, that in cases of uncertainty the accused has the benefit of the doubt; but at the period of which we are writing, these truths were far from being acknowledged; guilt was presumed rather than innocence; and torture, instituted to force confession from those who could not otherwise be convicted, is only explicable by supposing the judges convinced of the actual guilt of the accused; for no one would have thought of subjecting a possibly innocent person to this suffering. However, notwithstanding this prejudice, which has been handed down to us by some organs of the public ministry always dis-

She cried aloud, and fell back insensible;—she recognised her real husband!

—p. 2107

*From the original illustration by Bourdet*

posed to assume the guilt of a suspected person,—notwithstanding this prejudice, the judges in this case neither ventured to condemn Martin Guerre themselves as an impostor, nor to demand the intervention of the Church. In this conflict of contrary testimony, which seemed to reveal the truth only to immediately obscure it again, in this chaos of arguments and conjectures which showed flashes of light only to extinguish them in greater darkness, consideration for the family prevailed. The sincerity of Bertrande, the future of the children, seemed reasons for proceeding with extreme caution, and this once admitted, could only yield to conclusive evidence. Consequently the Parliament adjourned the case, matters remaining *in statu quô,* pending a more exhaustive inquiry. Meanwhile, the accused, for whom several relations and friends gave surety, was allowed to be at liberty at Artigues, though remaining under careful surveillance.

Bertrande therefore again saw him an inmate of the house, as if no doubts had ever been cast on the legitimacy of their union. What thoughts passed through her mind during the long *tête-à-tête?* She had accused this man of imposture, and now, notwithstanding her secret conviction, she was obliged to appear as if she had no suspicion, as if she had been mistaken, to humiliate herself before the impostor, and ask forgiveness for the insanity of her

conduct; for, having publicly renounced her accusation by refusing to swear to it, she had no alternative left. In order to sustain her part and to save the honour of her children, she must treat this man as her husband and appear submissive and repentant; she must show him entire confidence, as the only means of rehabilitating him and lulling the vigilance of justice. What the widow of Martin Guerre must have suffered in this life of effort was a secret between God and herself, but she looked at her little daughter, she thought of her fast approaching confinement, and took courage.

One evening, towards nightfall, she was sitting near him in the most private corner of the garden, with her little child on her knee, whilst the adventurer, sunk in gloomy thoughts, absently stroked Sanxi's fair head. Both were silent, for at the bottom of their hearts each knew the other's thoughts, and, no longer able to talk familiarly, nor daring to appear estranged, they spent, when alone together, long hours of silent dreariness.

All at once a loud uproar broke the silence of their retreat; they heard the exclamations of many persons, cries of surprise mixed with angry tones, hasty footsteps, then the garden gate was flung violently open, and old Marguerite appeared, pale, gasping, almost breathless. Bertrande hastened towards her in astonishment, followed by her hus-

band, but when near enough to speak she could only answer with inarticulate sounds, pointing with terror to the courtyard of the house. They looked in this direction, and saw a man standing at the threshold; they approached him. He stepped forward, as if to place himself between them. He was tall, dark; his clothes were torn; he had a wooden leg; his countenance was stern. He surveyed Bertrande with a gloomy look: she cried aloud, and fell back insensible; . . . she recognised her real husband!

Arnauld du Thill stood petrified. While Marguerite, distracted herself, endeavoured to revive her mistress, the neighbours, attracted by the noise, invaded the house, and stopped, gazing with stupefaction at this astonishing resemblance. The two men had the same features, the same height, the same bearing, and suggested one being in two persons. They gazed at each other in terror, and in that superstitious age the idea of sorcery and of infernal intervention naturally occurred to those present. All crossed themselves, expecting every moment to see fire from heaven strike one or other of the two men, or that the earth would engulf one of them. Nothing happened, however, except that both were promptly arrested, in order that the strange mystery might be cleared up.

The wearer of the wooden leg, interrogated by

the judges, related that he came from Spain, where first the healing of his wound, and then the want of money, had detained him hitherto. He had travelled on foot, almost a beggar. He gave exactly the same reasons for leaving Artigues as had been given by the other Martin Guerre, namely, a domestic quarrel caused by jealous suspicion, the desire of seeing other countries, and an adventurous disposition. He had gone back to his birthplace, in Biscay; thence he entered the service of the Cardinal of Burgos; then the cardinal's brother had taken him to the war, and he had served with the Spanish troops; at the battle of St. Quentin his leg had been shattered by an arquebus ball. So far his recital was the counterpart of the one already heard by the judges from the other man. Now they began to differ. Martin Guerre stated that he had been conveyed to a house by a man whose features he did not distinguish, that he thought he was dying, and that several hours elapsed of which he could give no account, being probably delirious; that he suffered later intolerable pain, and on coming to himself, found that his leg had been amputated. He remained long between life and death, but he was cared for by peasants who probably saved his life; his recovery was very slow. He discovered that in the interval between being struck down in the battle and recovering his senses, his

papers had disappeared, but it was impossible to suspect the people who had nursed him with such generous kindness of theft. After his recovery, being absolutely destitute, he sought to return to France and again see his wife and child: he had endured all sorts of privations and fatigues, and at length, exhausted, but rejoicing at being near the end of his troubles, he arrived, suspecting nothing, at his own door. Then the terror of the old servant, a few broken words, made him guess at some misfortune, and the appearance of his wife and of a man so exactly like himself stupefied him. Matters had now been explained, and he only regretted that his wound had not at once ended his existence.

The whole story bore the impress of truth, but when the other prisoner was asked what he had to say he adhered to his first answers, maintaining their correctness, and again asserted that he was the real Martin Guerre, and that the new claimant could only be Arnauld du Thill, the clever impostor, who was said to resemble himself so much that the inhabitants of Sagias had agreed in mistaking him for the said Arnauld.

The two Martin Guerres were then confronted without changing the situation in the least; the first showing the same assurance, the same bold and confident bearing; while the second, calling

on God and men to bear witness to his sincerity, deplored his misfortune in the most pathetic terms.

The judge's perplexity was great: the affair became more and more complicated, the question remained as difficult, as uncertain as ever. All the appearances and evidences were at variance; probability seemed to incline towards one, sympathy was more in favour of the other, but actual proof was still wanting.

At length a member of the Parliament, M. de Coras, proposed as a last chance before resorting to torture, that final means of examination in a barbarous age, that Bertrande should be placed between the two rivals, trusting, he said, that in such a case a woman's instinct would divine the truth. Consequently the two Martin Guerres were brought before the Parliament, and a few moments after Bertrande was led in, weak, pale, hardly able to stand, being worn out by suffering and advanced pregnancy. Her appearance excited compassion, and all watched anxiously to see what she would do. She looked at the two men, who had been placed at different ends of the hall, and turning from him who was nearest to her, went and knelt silently before the man with the wooden leg; then, joining her hands as if praying for mercy, she wept bitterly. So simple and touching an action roused the sympathy of all pres-

ent; Arnauld du Thill grew pale, and everyone expected that Martin Guerre, rejoiced at being vindicated by this public acknowledgment, would raise his wife and embrace her. But he remained cold and stern, and in a contemptuous tone—

"Dry your tears, madame," he said; "they do not move me in the least, neither can you seek to excuse your credulity by the examples of my sisters and my uncle. A wife knows her husband more intimately than his other relations, as you prove by your present action, and if she is deceived it is because she consents to the deception. You are the sole cause of the misfortunes of my house, and to you only shall I ever impute them."

Thunderstruck by this reproach, the poor woman had no strength to reply, and was taken home more dead than alive.

The dignified language of this injured husband made another point in his favour. Much pity was felt for Bertrande, as being the victim of an audacious deception; but everybody agreed that thus it beseemed the real Martin Guerre to have spoken. After the ordeal gone through by the wife had been also essayed by the sisters and other relatives, who one and all followed Bertrande's example and accepted the new-comer, the court, having fully deliberated, passed the following sentence, which we transcribe literally:—

"Having reviewed the trial of Arnauld du Thill or Pansette, calling himself Martin Guerre, a prisoner in the Conciergerie, who appeals from the decision of the judge of Rieux, etc.,

"We declare that this court negatives the appeal and defence of the said Arnauld du Thill; and as punishment and amends for the imposture, deception, assumption of name and of person, adultery, rape, sacrilege, theft, larceny, and other deeds committed by the aforesaid du Thill, and causing the above-mentioned trial; this court has condemned and condemns him to do penance before the church of Artigue, kneeling, clad in his shirt only, bareheaded and barefoot, a halter on his neck, and a burning torch in his hand, and there he shall ask pardon from God, from the King, and from justice, from the said Martin Guerre and Bertrande de Rolls, husband and wife: and this done, the aforesaid du Thill shall be delivered into the hands of the executioners of the King's Justice, who shall lead him through the customary streets and crossroads of the aforesaid place of Artigues, and, the halter on his neck, shall bring him before the house of the aforesaid Martin Guerre, where he shall be hung and strangled upon a gibbet erected for this purpose, after which his body shall be burnt: and for various reasons and considerations thereunto moving the court, it has awarded and awards the goods of

the aforesaid Arnauld du Thill, apart from the expenses of justice, to the daughter born unto him by the aforesaid Bertrande de Rolls, under pretence of marriage falsely asserted by him, having thereto assumed the name and person of the aforesaid Martin Guerre, by this means deceiving the aforesaid de Rolls; and moreover the court has exempted and exempts from this trial the aforesaid Martin Guerre and Bertrande de Rolls, also the said Pierre Guerre, uncle of the aforesaid Martin, and has remitted and remits the aforesaid Arnauld du Thill to the aforesaid judge of Rieux, in order that the present sentence may be executed according to its form and tenor. Pronounced judicially this 12th day of September 1560."

This sentence substituted the gallows for the decapitation decreed by the first judge, inasmuch as the latter punishment was reserved for criminals of noble birth, while hanging was inflicted on meaner persons.

When once his fate was decided, Arnauld du Thill lost all his audacity. Sent back to Artigues, he was interrogated in prison by the judge of Rieux, and confessed his imposture at great length. He said the idea first occurred to him when, having returned from the camp in Picardy, he was addressed as Martin Guerre by several intimate friends of the latter. He then inquired as to the sort of

life, the habits and relations of this man, and having contrived to be near him, had watched him closely during the battle. He saw him fall, carried him away, and then, as the reader has already seen, excited his delirium to the utmost in order to obtain possession of his secrets. Having thus explained his successful imposture by natural causes, which excluded any idea of magic or sorcery, he protested his penitence, implored the mercy of God, and prepared himself for execution as became a Christian.

The next day, while the populace, collecting from the whole neighbourhood, had assembled before the parish church of Artigues in order to behold the penance of the criminal, who, barefoot, attired in a shirt, and holding a lighted torch in his hand, knelt at the entrance of the church, another scene, no less painful, took place in the house of Martin Guerre. Exhausted by her suffering, which had caused a premature confinement, Bertrande lay on her couch of pain, and besought pardon from him whom she had innocently wronged, entreating him also to pray for her soul. Martin Guerre, sitting at her bedside, extended his hand and blessed her. She took his hand and held it to her lips; she could no longer speak. All at once a loud noise was heard outside: the guilty man had just been executed in front of the house. When finally attached to the

gallows, he uttered a terrible cry, which was answered by another from inside the house. The same evening, while the body of the malefactor was being consumed by fire, the remains of a mother and child were laid to rest in consecrated ground.